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JOLLY CALLE

AND OTHER

SWEDISH FAIRY TALES

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Nothing pleased him.

JOLLY CALLE
& other
SWEDISH FAIRY TALES
by HELENA NYBLOM

Illustrated by
CHARLES FOLKARD

J.M.DENT & SONS, LP.
·LONDON·

E.P.DUTTON & Co
·NEW YORK·

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Jolly Calf

JOLLY CALLE

Once upon a time there was a boy called Jolly Calle who was always as happy as happy could be. He was a poor boy and quite alone in the world, for he had lost both his father and mother. If anyone pitied him on account of this misfortune he would answer :

" Well, at any rate I had a father and mother once, and I remember them both quite well. I remember being whipped by my father, and my mother wiping away my tears and kissing me. I am quite sure they are both in heaven now, for all the loving care they gave me here on earth, and I ought not to wish my parents back again out of heaven, ought I ? Just think of those who can't remember ever having set eyes on their parents ! You may be sorry for *them* if you like ! " And then Calle would laugh.

When it rained Calle was always in the best of spirits.

"There is nothing so merry as the rain," he would say. "Look at all the funny little drops sparkling and hopping about, and one gets so nice and wet all over too!"

In stormy weather he would laugh, and let the wind catch him in the back and send him flying along the road.

"I say, what fun!" he would say. "Now I am travelling by train for nothing!" But when the sun shone Jolly Calle would smile quietly.

"Ah, the Lord be praised for his glorious sunshine!" he would say. "Is it not too lovely for anything to feel just as if a bit of blue sky and sunshine had crept into your heart?"

Jolly Calle had never been taught any trade, for his parents had never been able to afford it; neither could he play on any instrument, and as for learning, he had none at all. He did not want to starve, still less to beg, so he took an old shoe-brush and polished up his shoes, for he was determined to go out into the world to try his fortune;

and when he saw how his shoes shone it occurred to him that there were indeed many pairs of shoes in the world which might require brushing, so he stuffed his brush into his pocket and went forth along the high road which led out into the wide world.

When he had gone a little way he came to a field where the waving corn was already standing high.

It was so lovely to look upon that Calle turned aside into a narrow path, which ran like a ribbon through the corn-field, and as he went along he drew an ear of wheat between his fingers and sang :

"Just look upon my corn-fields, see! for me there'll be no lack ;
In winter time such piles of loaves will make the oven crack."

"What are you shouting, you noisy fellow?" called out a gruff voice behind him. It was the farmer who owned the field. "*Your* corn-field, indeed," he said angrily. "It is I who have ploughed and sown, and it is I who will reap the corn, and grind the flour, and eat the bread, not a crumb of which shall you taste!"

"I am not talking of bread, I am talking of the corn-field," said Jolly Calle, taking off his cap to the harsh old man; "and I still think, for the present at any rate, the corn-field belongs to me. You have had the trouble of ploughing and sowing it, and I am much obliged to you, for now I can dance right through it and see waves chase each other over the rippling corn, and that doesn't cost a farthing." And so saying he ran off.

After walking all day he came towards evening to a big town, upon entering which he stationed himself at a street corner with his shoe-brush and waited to see if any of the passers-by would ask him to brush the dust off their shoes, but they all seemed to have much too much to think of, and went hastily by without so much as turning their heads.

"Perhaps in this case it would be just as well to give them a gentle reminder," thought he; and as a soldier happened to pass just at that very moment, Jolly Calle spat upon his brush and said in a tone as if the colonel himself were commanding:

"Shoes brushed?"

The soldier halted on the spot and let Calle polish his top-boots.

Then a little damsel came tripping along, so neat and trim.

"What a nice little pair of feet!" said Calle softly behind her back. "The only pity is they should go about in such dirty shoes." Thereupon the little damsel turned round, stretched out her foot, and let Calle black her shoes.

Next a scholar came walking by who seemed neither to hear nor see.

"So the gentleman would like his shoes brushed?" said Calle, and fell upon his knees right in front of the learned man's legs, and in the same absent-minded way as he had been walking before the scholar now as absent-mindedly stood still and let Calle brush his boots.

Thus Calle had a word for every one who passed by, and as he received a trifle from all those whose boots he brushed he soon had his pocket full of pence.

Then he brushed his own shoes once more till they shone like a black-a-moor's skin; as they

were the only elegance he possessed he thought he might afford himself that little piece of vanity. Then he set his red cap jauntily on one side and went on to see something of the town which pleased him mightily; there were so many magnificent buildings and fine mansions, but there was one mansion more beautiful than all the rest.

It stood with its pillars and statues and stately staircases in the middle of a rose garden and was surrounded by a railing with gilded lance-heads running all around the top.

"My eye!" said Jolly Calle, as he stood grasping the railings and looking in upon the stately mansion. "This is something like! This house of mine is certainly far and away the finest in the whole town."

"What is this nonsense you are talking?" asked a haughty footman, who was standing stiff as a marionette at the entrance. "Your house, indeed! This mansion belongs to the richest man in the town, Master Nabob. It cost a hundred thousand pounds just as it stands."

"That was a mighty deal of money," said Calle,

scratching his ear. "If Master Nabob has had such a lot of expense on my account I am really greatly obliged to him. Give him my compliments and tell him I am extremely pleased."

"You are certainly a little queer in the head," said the lackey. "Master Nabob built this mansion for his honour's own gracious satisfaction and pleasure. He has, I assure you, never even heard of you, or done anything whatever just to please *you*."

"That may be," answered Calle, "but all the same he has had all the trouble and all the expense, whereas I have nothing but the pleasure of seeing how fine and elegant it all is. I suppose we may be allowed to *look* at the house at any rate."

But the lackey did not reply, he turned on his heel and walked away with a dignified air.

After standing awhile, gazing in at the palace and sniffing up the scent of the roses, Jolly Calle went on further till he came at last to a big market-place where vendors of fruit and vegetables were selling their wares.

Here all was life and bustle. A big fountain

was playing in the middle of the square, and all around it the market people had set up their stalls in long rows and spread their awnings, for the sun was burning hot.

Here there were baskets full of the finest pears and apples and whole barrows full of yellow plums and ripe peaches. Big purple grapes lay upon green leaves between golden melons and red cherries, and alongside the fruit were masses of sweet-scented flowers, roses and clove pinks, mignonette and stocks.

Jolly Calle expanded his nostrils and opened his mouth wide to take in as much as ever he could of all these delicious scents, and then buying a handful of plums he leaned against a stall to eat them. Whilst he stood there he watched the customers coming and going between the stalls.

These were mostly dames and damsels of high degree followed by their serving-women carrying the baskets. They would stand now at this stall now at that, picking and choosing and filling their baskets with all the things they liked best.

Beside Calle stood a number of other lads, who like him had also bought fruit and were busy

eating, taking stock meanwhile of all the pretty maids who tripped along to make their bargains.

Suddenly Calle heard them whisper: "Here she comes, here she comes." And out from amongst the stalls stepped the most beautiful damsel.

She was dressed in a red silk petticoat and a green velvet bodice embroidered with silver. On her head she wore a black veil, and in her hand she carried a large fan covered with silver spangles, with which she kept fanning herself. But if her clothes were beautiful, she herself was more beautiful still, and she stepped along like a queen, smiling and nodding in every direction.

"What do you say to her?" asked the lad standing beside Calle, giving him a poke in the ribs. "Have you ever seen anyone so beautiful before? We call her the crown jewel, for she has not her match anywhere. But such poor fellows as you or I will never have so much as the honour of tying her shoe laces!"

"We shall see," thought Calle, and just as the lovely lady was passing close beside him he fell on his knees and called out:

"My lady, my lady! there is dust on your

shoes!" And before she could answer he had whipped out his brush and had begun to polish one of her shoes. She lifted the hem of her skirt a little and put forward first one foot and then the other, and when she saw how bright and shining her shoes were she smiled graciously and patted Calle on the shoulder.

"You are a treasure of a lad," she said. "See how nice and bright you have made my shoes!" And then she passed on.

"Did you see?" said Calle, turning to the boy at his side; "I not only tied her shoe laces, but I even polished her shoes, and she patted me on the shoulder into the bargain and called me a treasure of a lad."

"Oh, well!" said the other, "it is true you have knelt in the dirt at her feet, but you need not think you will sit beside her as her bridegroom; *that* you will never do."

"Nor do I want to either," said Calle. "Do you think that she who wears silver brocade and has the eyes of the whole town upon her would be an easy customer to deal with? No, indeed! such a crown jewel I have no wish to possess.

But I grant you, beautiful she is to look at and no mistake! Her eyelashes threw quite a shadow across my hands, and never have I seen such beautiful eyebrows or such white teeth; why, they looked sound enough to bite off the head of a nail!" And so saying Calle walked off.

When he had been a day or two in the town he had a mind to go on further into the world, so he started off along the highway. After a time he came to an inn. Here he went in and asked for a bowl of curds and whey, for he was thirsty after his long tramp.

He was given a seat near the door, and whilst he sat and waited for the curds he looked about him.

Outside on the high road stood six waggons drawn by oxen, and over the waggons were spread leather coverings, beneath which were rows and rows of sacks.

"Whom do all those waggons belong to?" Jolly Calle asked the boy who set down the curds before him.

"They belong to Master Nabob," answered the

boy; and "Master Nabob himself is sitting over there in the best seat, eating fruit soup out of a silver bowl." Calle looked up towards the upper end of the room, and there sure enough sat Master Nabob himself.

He wore white breeches trimmed with gold braid and a red frock-coat covered with ever so many orders and medals which he had received for—well, nobody knew exactly why he had received them! He was eating prunes as large as mice and drinking sweet wine, but he looked as if he were swallowing the most bitter physic. His complexion was pale green, his cheeks sunken, and you would have thought by the look in his eyes that he had just been told something most disagreeable.

Meanwhile Jolly Calle sat shovelling the curds into his mouth with a wooden spoon, and with every mouthful he swallowed he patted his stomach and said:

"Well, that *was* wonderful, that *was* wonderful!"

Then Master Nabob looked up from his fruit soup and asked: "What is wonderful?"

"Only this, your honour, that never in all my

life has anything tasted so sour or so good as these curds and whey here."

"Would you not prefer my fruit soup with prunes?" asked Nabob.

"Dear me, no!" answered Calle; "for if you eat something very sour you can always be ready for something sweet afterwards, but if you eat something very sweet, then you might feel you have had too much of a good thing."

"You are no fool," said Nabob.

When they had finished eating and had risen from the table they each gave something to the boy who had waited on them. Nabob gave him a very small coin and Jolly Calle one somewhat bigger.

"H'm, you are a rich fellow, you are," said Nabob, glaring at Calle.

"No, indeed, but after those sour curds I couldn't stand the sight of such a sour look as the one you've just had from the serving-boy," answered Calle.

After dinner they both sat in the garden of the inn. Master Nabob ordered out for himself any number of bottles with good drinks, and black

coffee and tobacco, and then he stretched his legs in their white gold-braided breeches upon a chair in front of him and prepared to enjoy life. But one drink was too strong, another was too weak, and the coffee too had a poor flavour, which made Master Nabob turn green in the face with annoyance. Neither was the tobacco to his liking; in short, nothing pleased him, and he kept calling to the serving-men and ordering them about till they flew like frightened hens backwards and forwards between the box hedges.

Jolly Calle had seated himself in an arbour, where the white jasmine was in full flower, and a lime-tree afforded him welcome shade. He ordered a mug of ale, lighted his short pipe, and sat with his elbows on the table looking up through the leaves of the trees at the blue summer sky, and he felt so merry and jolly that he began to laugh aloud. When Master Nabob heard him laughing from where he sat surrounded by all his bottles, he sent a lad to Calle to ask him if he was sitting there laughing at him, for if so, he was not going to put up with *that*.

"My compliments to Master Nabob!" answered

Calle, "and tell him I don't think he is at all amusing."

After a while Calle began to laugh again, for the sunshine was so bright and the sky so blue he simply could not help himself.

"What in the name of fortune is the fellow laughing at?" yelled Nabob. "Go and ask him why he is laughing; it plagues me."

When the serving-lad came again with Master Nabob's message, Calle replied:

"My compliments to Master Nabob, and tell him I am not laughing at anything." With this answer the rich man had to be content; but in a short space Calle completely forgot his sour neighbour and began again to chuckle and chuckle till he was simply bubbling over with laughter.

"I can't stand this," shouted Nabob, "I won't stand this! Go and tell that fellow he annoys me. Tell him he shall have a thaler from me if he will only stop laughing."

Now when the lad brought this message Jolly Calle became really angry. He flung the thaler down till it rang upon the table.

"If I cannot sit here in peace I shall not stay.

I shall take myself off, and that without more ado. The high road at any rate is free to every one." And so saying he strode out of the garden.

It was a warm day, and after he had walked on some distance he heard a great rumbling of wheels on the high road behind him. It was Master Nabob coming along in his gilded coach, and followed by his six ox-waggons laden with all his money.

When Nabob caught sight of Calle he beckoned to him, and calling to his coachman to stop he asked Calle if he would care to drive with him.

No, indeed! Calle did not care at all. On such a beautiful day he much preferred to walk along the road-side and sniff the scent of the new-mown hay in the meadows and listen to the larks singing than sit in a stuffy coach with an old man who smelt of dinner and wine. And this he said right out, whereupon Master Nabob smiled a sour smile. Then all at once a new notion came into Nabob's head. He began to scold and abuse the coachman for not stopping quickly enough, although the carriage was going already at a funeral pace. Then he opened the door of the

coach very carefully, and after he had been helped out by his footman he asked Calle in a really polite tone if he would allow him to accompany him a short way along the road and let him have the honour of leaning on his arm.

"With all my heart," answered Calle, who could not for the life of him understand what this all meant.

Nabob gave his coachman orders to drive on and wait for him at the edge of the wood, and then he walked on along the road, leaning on his gold-topped mahogany walking stick, with his arm through Calle's.

"My dear friend," began Nabob, "I have a great desire to make your further acquaintance."

"Oh, by all means," answered Calle, "that is easily done."

Nabob fixed his green eyes upon him. "A strange thing!" he muttered; "A strange thing! I have never in my life seen anyone like you."

"That's very odd," answered Calle. "I always thought there were thirteen to the dozen of my sort."

"H'm!" said Nabob. "I saw you first when

I was sitting behind my green silk curtains, and you were standing at the gate looking in at my mansion. You were not a bit envious, I remember!"

"Why should I be," answered Calle. "You nave all the trouble and the expense of the house, and I have nothing but the pleasure of looking at it, so it is easy to understand which of us is the happier."

"I had fruit soup with prunes while you ate curds with a wooden spoon," continued Nabob, "and you would not change places with me."

"No, truly, seeing you did not relish it," replied Calle, "I had no need to envy you."

"And there I sat surrounded by all those bottles of mine," said Nabob, his voice trembling, "yellow bottles, red bottles, green bottles, strong black coffee and big cigars, and I could not endure to hear you laugh. As you sat there with your mug of ale and your clay pipe, under the lime tree, I felt envious for the first time in my life, so envious that it gave me quite a pain in my chest.

"You see, Calle—I presume I may call you Calle?—you see I have everything in the world

that a man can desire, and yet I am never happy. I have a house and gardens, woods and broad acres, servants and horses, and a great pile of gold, yet it feels as empty inside me as in an old sack. When I travel I must always take my gold with me. I drive in a gilded coach with six ox-waggons full of money behind me, but when I hear the rumbling of all those waggons it irritates me so I feel positively ill. I can procure all that man can buy for money, and up to now I thought money could buy everything. But when you who are so poor would not stop laughing for a whole thaler, well, then indeed a strange feeling came over me and I began to think, Is there really something one cannot buy for money?"

"Can you buy sunshine for money?" asked Callie. "Can you buy health for money? Can you buy good temper for money?"

"That's it, that's it!" burst out Nabob, showing all his shaky old teeth. "Good temper! that's what you possess, and it is just that which I must and will have a share of, at all costs."

"And what will you give me for it?" asked Calle laughing.

"You shall have a hundred thalers—a thousand thalers! You shall have one of my ox-waggons full of gold!"

"That is not enough," said Calle. "You are offering poor pay."

"Let us say three waggons then," said Nabob, with a sigh, "three ox-waggons full of money for a little bit of good temper."

"Poor pay, poor pay!" answered Calle.

"Then take four—five!" groaned Nabob; "I must have your good temper, cost what it may."

They had now reached the edge of the wood, where the gilded coach and the ox-waggons loaded with money stood waiting.

"Calle, my good fellow!" said Nabob, "you shall have all my six ox-waggons, my gilded coach, and those rogues of a coachman and footman into the bargain—all, all shall be yours, if only, my dear lad, you will let me have your good temper!"

"No, I cannot," said Calle, "I really cannot. To turn sick at the sight of God's good gifts, to feel pain in your inside at the rumbling of your waggons full of treasure—no, that I could not stand at any price! But see how dusty your

fine patent-leather shoes have got from walking along the high road! Put your foot on a stone and I will brush them for you."

So Nabob put up first one foot and then the other upon a stone, and Calle brushed his shoes till they shone.

"What have I to pay?" said Nabob, feeling for his purse with a trembling hand.

"Oh, nothing! nothing at all!" answered Calle. "Rich folk cannot afford to pay for such trifles."

"Just tell me one thing before you go," begged Nabob. His yellow face had become still yellower. "Tell me this one thing, my dear Calle. Why are you so happy?"

"Why am I so happy?" Calle repeated with a laugh. "Why, just because I am alive you see!" And so saying he hopped over the stile, waved his red cap, and disappeared, hidden like a strawberry in the wood.

But Nabob remained standing beside his ox-waggons, with his purse still open in his hand.

"He has gone," he said blankly. "Just imagine, he has actually gone!"

Rolf of Örkanäs

Goblin creatures - like big rats
— or little pigs

Once upon a time, many hundreds of years ago, there was an ancient Manor-house called Örkanäs.

It lay in the very heart of Sweden, high up on a mountain ridge, and from it you could see right away across the country for miles and miles; and what you saw was forest, forest, forest, and nothing but forest—green and brown and black forest, and away on the farthest horizon gleamed a long blue streak, and that too was forest.

Here and there amid all that forest-land a little bright patch would catch the eye, this was some little lake lying asleep amid the loneliness.

And here and there a church spire stood up like a mast above all that great wide sea of forest, but not a single human dwelling could be seen.

Orkanäs lay so remote from all frequented roads

and inhabited parts of the country that seldom, if ever, did folks find their way up there.

The Manor was built of great grey, roughly hewn stones, so that it almost looked as if it had sprung up out of the very rock itself.

It faced the north, and it was always shady and cool up there, even on the hottest summer day.

The roof of the Manor-house had four gables, looking towards all the four quarters of the compass.

Inside the courtyard, which was strewn with coarse gravel, grew three giant linden-trees. They had stood there for many a hundred year; no one but themselves knew when they had been planted, and they never spoke of that far-off time; they only rustled their leaves, murmured softly to themselves, and hung their branches full in summer-time with a thousand sweet-scented blossoms amongst which the honey-bees buzzed in and out.

In the old Manor-house lived Dame Brita with her son Rolf. She had been married when she was quite a child, as the custom was in those days of long ago, and when she was only fifteen years old her husband died. He fell in the wars away

in a far-off country, and where it was no one now could say.

And so Dame Brita was left a widow with her little new-born son. He was thus the only child she possessed, and all the love she had, and that was much, she gave to little Rolf.

When he was still quite small she would place him before her on her saddle-bow, whenever she rode out with her train of armed men, and when he was a little bigger he had a little palfrey of his own and would trot along at her side.

When he grew older he would ride out with her to the chase, away into the great forest to trap hares and foxes or hunt the lynx or the wolf, and he soon learned to hurl the long lance with such sure aim that it would hang quivering in the tallest pine-tree.

With his light arrows he could shoot hawks upon the wing and hares as they bounded along, and when he was twelve years old he slew a bear with his sword single-handed. Where the forest became too dense, so dense, indeed, that no human foot could penetrate it and no horse make his way through, Dame Brita and Rolf would take a boat

up the streams from one lake to another. Many a garth and many a mill and fishing-ground belonged to Örkanäs, and in summer mother and son would journey far and wide, from the rising of the sun until far on into the long, light summer night.

But in the winter they lived in solitude high up in Örkanäs, and then Dame Brita would read out of the old Chronicles, or tell her little son wonderful old tales of long ago, whilst the storm-winds and the whirling snow beat against the walls without and the pine-logs crackled and sizzled upon the open hearth.

Rolf's eyes would get rounder and rounder, and brighter and brighter, and when Dame Brita had told the tale to the end he would strike the table with his small fist till the candle-sticks jingled and danced, saying, "I too will be such a knight. I will kill hob-goblins and slay dragons and hew off the heads of lindworms, and then I shall come home with a princess on my saddle-bow—one who will be worth calling a princess, too, I can tell thee!"

When Rolf was twenty he was as tall as his

mother, and even taller, and when they came riding along they looked more like bride and bridegroom than mother and son.

The fresh healthy air of Örkanäs kept Dame Brita young; besides, she was not so very old either! She was still fair and handsome, and her son was like her. They would often laugh when they looked at each other, for they loved each other dearly, and Dame Brita had indeed no one in all the world but her beloved son.

When the linden buds were beginning to get sticky, and the first swallows were darting swift as arrows about the gables of Örkanäs, Dame Brita knew that once again the blessed summer-time was at hand, when their long farings about the country-side would begin.

Every morning Dame Brita would go up to the turret room where Rolf slept to call him.

She always carried a pewter mug filled with new milk in her hand, and she would stand beside his bed and say:

"Come, my son, come, it is time once again to get up and live!"

The first thing Rolf saw when he opened his

eyes was the sunshine playing upon a little red stone, which gleamed upon Dame Brita's white finger, as she handed him the pewter mug.

Then he would sit up in bed and drink off the milk at one draught, wipe his mouth, and kiss his mother.

He had done this from the time he was a small boy, and he did it now when he was twenty.

Now it so happened one summer morning, that Dame Brita went into the chamber where all the weapons were stored. There against the wall hung the whole of her husband's armour—helmet, sword, and shield. It looked just as if a man, fully armed, were leaning against the wall.

Rolf had taken down his father's sword, and drawn it out of the sheath, and was now standing looking at it. Dame Brita stole quietly out again, but the next day Rolf was there again. This time he had put on the coat of mail. He did not notice his mother this day either, and the day when Dame Brita came in Rolf was clad in the whole suit of armour, with the helmet on his head and the sword in his hand. Then Dame Brita saw for the first that her son Rolf had come to

a man's strength, and he told her, that now since the time had come when he could bear his father's weapons he wanted to go out into the world to do them honour.

Dame Brita had, of course, expected this day would come, sooner or later, and she did not oppose her son's desire, she only said:

"What dost thou think thou wilt find out in the world which thou dost not already possess up here in Örkanäs? All the heavens above thee, and all the earth beneath thee, work in the day, rest at night, and thy mother's love!" But to this Rolf made answer that as long as there was so much evil in the world to fight against, goblins and dragons to slay and innocent princesses to set free, no grown youth ought to be content to bide at home on his mother's estate.

Then Dame Brita polished up his weapons with her own hand.

She made the blue plumes fast in his helmet and burnished the shield, embossed with its three white lilies, till it shone like the surface of smooth waters in the sunshine. Then she mounted her horse and rode by her son's side down to the little

convent chapel, which they could see from Örkanäs. Here they dismounted and went in, for Dame Brita was a pious woman, who would not have her son ride out into the world without having his weapons blessed.

And so Rolf laid both shield and sword upon the altar, and the monk from the cloister blessed them three times, and said:

"From all evil shall this shield protect thee."

"Against all evil shall this sword prevail."

After this they again mounted their horses, and Rolf and his mother kissed each other and said farewell, he riding towards the south, and she turning her horse's head towards the north.

But when Rolf reached a clearing in the forest he turned his horse once more and he saw his mother rein in her horse a long, long way off, far up the mountain-side. And high above her the sun shone brightly down upon Örkanäs.

And so Rolf rode forth into the world to seek his fortune.

The first day he rode on and on through nothing but spruce woods. The branches of the trees hung so low that they swept across his

helmet and his horse sank up to his knees into banks of moss a thousand years old. The only living thing Rolf saw was an adder lying across his horse's path which raised itself up and shot out its tongue at him. In the evening, being weary, he stretched himself upon the moss under a fir-tree to sleep, and slept soundly all night. He was awakened in the morning by the touch of something on his mouth. "Here comes mother with the milk," he thought in his dreams, but it was only a butterfly fluttering across his face.

The second day he rode on and on through nothing but pine forest. Here the boles of the trees were so straight and so tall that they looked like the pillars of a church, and up above in their wide-spreading tops the wind was sighing as mournfully as if something quite hopelessly sad had happened. Masses of fallen rock lay scattered about in the forest, and ever and again a noisy little brook rippled over the stones.

The only living creatures Rolf came across were crows—quite a flock of them hopping about and pecking at a dead weasel.

"Caw, caw, we are off in a trice," cried the crows, and with that they flew away.

By nightfall Rolf was still in the forest, and he lay down beneath an over-hanging rock to sleep. He awoke thinking it was morning at Örkanäs and, half-waking, half-sleeping, he said to himself:

"See how the sunshine is dancing on mother's ring!"

But it was only the rosy sunbeams of early morning striking straight across his eyes. Then he saddled his horse and rode on. That day lindens and aspens began to mingle with the other forest trees, and it became easier to make one's way along. Towards evening Rolf met a fox bearing off a hen in its mouth, then he knew he must be getting nearer the dwellings of men, and before the sun set he found himself out of the forest. There on the outskirts lay a little old cottage, and just outside an old, old man was standing.

"Dost thou happen to have seen my hen?" he asked Rolf.

"Why, it must have been the one I saw in a fox's mouth just a while ago," answered Rolf.

"Alas! I shall never see it any more then," said the old man; "and it was such a nice hen too, of quite a respectable age!"

Then Rolf asked the old man if he could direct him to the king's castle, for thither was he bound, as he would fain enter the king's service.

Yes, the old man knew the way well enough, but the road was not easy to traverse, for it led through the enchanted forest and the dragon's gorge, and so far no living soul who had ridden that way had ever come back alive.

Then Rolf begged to be allowed to sleep hard by the old man's hut, for if he was to fight with goblins he preferred to do it by daylight, when he could see what he was striking at, and in this the old man quite agreed. Then he begged Rolf to sleep in his miserable cottage, if he could put up with the poor comfort it afforded, but Rolf thought it was so small and so stuffy that he lay down instead on the grass beneath the starry sky; but he gave the old man a small piece of silver for his kind offer.

"Of what use is this to me?" said the old man, looking at the money with his red eyes.

"I can buy nothing for love or money for at least seventy miles around." And so saying he went into his cottage and shut the door. But Rolf slept serenely on the grass beneath the stars.

He was awakened in the morning by a rustling sound close beside him and he thought: "That is mother's dress, now she is coming to call me." But it was only the wind stirring in the hop-bines outside the old man's door. Then Rolf mounted his horse and rode on. Far away in the distance he could see the enchanted forest like a great black cloud outlined against the sky, and before midday he had reached it.

The moment he entered the forest he could scarcely see, so dark was it all around him. The trees grew so closely together and their black spreading tops were so thickly interlaced that the daylight could scarcely filter through them. It was more like moonlight than the light of day within. Neither grass nor flowers grew beneath the trees, the ground was nothing but a swamp where prickly thorn bushes and tall water plants had sprung up, and the path, if such it could

be called, was nothing but a heap of rough stones. All was so wondrous still and death-like within that forest. Not a breath of wind was stirring and the trees stood there like petrified ghosts with their black gnarled boughs looped and twisted into the most weird and fantastic shapes.

Rolf settled himself firmly in the saddle and rode on as fast as he could.

Then all at once he felt something fall plump upon his helmet. "A twig," thought he, and was about to brush it away when he felt something creeping on his neck.

"A squirrel," he said to himself, grasping the weird thing tightly which was crawling there on the nape of his neck.

But it was no squirrel, but the most horrible little hob-goblin. It looked partly like a monkey and partly like a dog, but it hadn't as much as a single hair on the whole of its body. It was a livid blue all over, and had chalk-white fingers and yellow streaks on its head. It looked at Rolf out of its fierce, green eyes, curling up its upper lip and showing its blue gums and sharp teeth. Rolf

was just about to thrash the very life out of it, when it darted up, flung both arms around his neck and nearly strangled him; at the same moment another goblin fell with a flop from the tree above, and yet another and another, and in a twinkling both Rolf and his horse were covered with hob-goblins. Other horrid-looking little goblin-creatures scrambled up from the swampy ground beneath. These looked like big rats or little pigs, but they had hands like babies and human ears; they climbed up the horse's legs and haunches and over Rolf's back, and all shouted and screeched and scolded together. Some seized Rolf's arms, others rode on his shoulders and clung with their arms round his neck. They kept biting and hitting out on all sides like a lot of mad creatures. But at last Rolf gathered up all his strength.

"From all evil shall my shield protect me, against all evil shall my sword prevail," he cried aloud, and thereupon he drew his sword and began his fight with the goblins.

He fought for three hours, he fought for six, but before the sun went down he had slain them

all. Then he dismounted, and tying all the goblins together by their tails slung them in bunches—a dozen to each—across his horse's haunches. And here they had to hang and dangle whilst he rode away out of the enchanted forest. But so wearied was he after the fight, that he just dropped like a stone at the foot of the first leafy tree he came across and slept far on into the morning. That night Rolf did not dream of Örkanäs. He only dreamed that he was fighting with hob-goblins.

And now he rode on again; and up among the mountains he met a little lad guarding a few miserable-looking sheep.

"Canst thou tell me the way to the dragon's gorge?" asked Rolf. The boy looked at him in amazement, and then pointed to a high mountain towering up against the sky a long, long way off. As long as Rolf remained in sight the boy stood gazing after him. "Beware!" he cried out in a shrill little voice. "Beware! lest the dragon eat thee. He has gobbled up bigger men than thou." But by that time Rolf was already a great way off. The road now lay through a barren tract of country, and the nearer Rolf came to tne mountain the

higher it seemed to rise up before him. The vegetation grew more and more sparse, till at length there was nothing but bare rock on every side. Narrower and narrower grew the path between the overhanging crags, and at last Rolf came to a stand before the dragon's gorge itself.

This was a long, narrow ravine between high black walls of rock rising sheer up on either side. The whole way along water trickled over the stones; it flowed with no pretty, gurgling, purling sound, but only seemed to ooze like sweat out of the rocks, and then dripped slowly down in heavy, ice-cold drops.

The air here in the gorge was so freezingly cold that both horse and rider began to shiver all over.

As Rolf rode along his horse's hoofs rang with such a hollow sound upon the stony ground that the very rocks themselves seemed hollow. Every now and then Rolf would think he heard some one riding behind him and turn in his saddle to look—but no one was to be seen. It was only the sound of his horse's hoof-beats echoing from the rocky sides of the ravine

Long and long did Rolf ride, on into the dragon's gorge, without seeing a living creature, and he was just beginning to think that perhaps the dragon had been slain by some other knight, when he became aware all at once of the most horrible stench. It was like the noisome smell of sulphur fumes, rotting carcasses, and stagnant water, and the instant after he heard a hissing sound as of many serpents. He looked up in the direction whence he thought the sound came; and all at once from a mountain peak high above him came the dragon rushing out of his den.

He looked like some giant lizard six times as long as the tallest man, and he was as leaden in colour as the rocks amongst which he lived. So big was his mouth that he could gobble up a horse and his rider as easily as a child eats bread and butter, and his huge jaws were full of a double row of sharp fangs. His thick, swingeing tail looped itself in great coils over the rocks, and from his gaping jaws his long tongue shot out stretching right across the gorge and blocking the way for Rolf. The latter reined in his horse and reflected

for a moment. Should he turn and ride back? But he had ridden out into the world for the very purpose of fighting against goblins and dragons or any vile thing that existed, and he certainly could not take to flight now that the moment for action had arrived, so he seated himself firmly in the saddle and put spurs to his horse, which began to rear and refused to go forward.

But when the dragon saw that the knight was in no way daunted, but continued to ride on at full gallop, he slithered swiftly down over the rocks to come at this bare-faced fellow more easily, who was presumptuous enough to dare to venture through the dragon's gorge.

On he rushed with his huge bloody jaws agape, shooting out his long tongue and breathing out smoke and flames.

Then Rolf shouted in a loud voice:

"From all evil shall my shield protect me, against all evil shall my sword prevail." And so saying he held his shield up high before him and hurled his long lance so far down the dragon's throat, that only the butt-end of the staff could be seen. The dragon recoiled and gasped for breath,

High above him came the Dragon.

but on the instant Rolf was off his horse, and taking his sword in his hand, he smote off the dragon's head. The monster gave one or two convulsive leaps, his blood splashing high up into the rocks, and then he fell down dead at the bottom of the gorge.

Then Rolf climbed up to his den and found it full of gold and silver and precious stones. He gathered up as much as he could carry on his horse's back and then rode on his way through the dragon's gorge. But both he and his horse were so weary, that he only rode at a foot's pace.

On the other side of the mountain a wide stretch of country opened out before them, with woods and meadows, rivers and corn-fields, and in the midst of the plain lay the king's palace with its gilded turrets glittering in the rays of the setting sun. Before nightfall Rolf had reached the castle; the watchman on the tower blew a loud blast on his horn when he saw a strange knight come riding over the drawbridge. When he had disclosed his name and his errand the gates were opened and the king himself came down to see what this stranger knight was like.

The king was most distinguished looking, with a pale face, red hair, and a long light red beard. He stroked his beard with his slender white hand and gazed curiously at Rolf, who had now reined in his horse.

Both horse and rider were bespattered with dirt and the blood of the dragon, on either side of the horse's flanks hung the big bunches of dead goblins tied together by the tails, and between them glittered the piles of gold and precious stones.

"Who art thou?" asked the king. "Where hast thou been, and what hast thou there on the back of thy horse?"

"I am Rolf, son of Dame Brita of Örkanäs," answered Rolf. "I have killed the goblins, slain the dragon, and seized his treasure; and now I would ask the king to take me into his service."

Then the king ordered his retainers to carry away all the goblins and throw them on to the dust-heap, and he had to hold his royal nose, for the goblin smell of them was too horrible for anything. But he had the treasure carried up into his treasure chamber and Rolf himself he took into his service and made him one of his knights.

There were a goodly number of men in the king's service, and many a tourney was held at the king's palace, and many a feat of arms performed there. But soon this merry game of war became war in earnest, for all the knights and squires had to follow the king into battle against the foes of the land.

For three years Rolf served his royal master, and as he constantly proved himself both a valiant and a faithful knight, the king became very attached to him.

In the winter they spent the greater part of the time at home in the palace, and right royally were they entertained with every kind of sport and pastime, and with princely banquets, where wine and mead flowed like rivers, and the gleemen sang to the music of the harp.

The king had become so attached to Rolf that he had given him a place at his side, and this the other knights eyed with anything but favour.

Nowhere is there so much jealousy and so many petty quarrels as in royal castles, and the more the king liked Rolf the more the knights looked askance at him. All this was just because

he was a stranger and had come from no one knew where, without credit or a word of recommendation from anybody, whereas many of the knights, who were at the court, were both lords and counts. But the king would not listen to all the evil things they tried to tell him about his favourite. He liked talking to him better than to anyone else, and at last Rolf had only the king to talk to. But there was one thing which had always surprised Rolf, and that was that the king never looked happy. This man, who possessed both power and fortune, never seemed to care to join in any feasting or merry-making; indeed it more often happened that the louder the sounds of merriment about him the more melancholy the king would look.

At last Rolf plucked up courage to ask the king what it was that made him so downcast that even in the midst of all the jollity about him there was always a cloud on his brow, and the king answered:

"I am sad because the most precious jewel in my crown is missing. I had one child, a daughter, the beautiful Hildegard, but the lind-worm came

and carried her off one midsummer day, when she was picking dog-roses on the edge of the forest." And the king went on to say how he had sent out one knight after the other to do battle with the lind-worm, but not one of them had ever come back, and now he knew he would never see his child again.

"And what will be my reward if I set her free?" asked Rolf.

"I have vowed," answered the king, "that the knight who slays the lind-worm and sets my daughter free shall have her in marriage and inherit my kingdom after my death."

"Then I will set thy daughter free," said Rolf, and rose from his seat; he was determined to ride off there and then. He burnished up his armour and sharpened his sword, then he gave his horse three days' rest and twice his usual amount of fodder, and on the fourth day he clad himself in his suit of mail and rode away over hills and dales to the lind-worm's forest haunts.

Encircling the forest about was a wide belt of briar-rose bushes, now covered with thousands of beautiful roses, but sharp thorns grew upon the

bushes too, and it was by no means easy to force a way through them. But Rolf at length succeeded in getting through, and he now found himself within the most beautiful forest you could possibly imagine. Here were nothing but leaf-woods, aspens and elms, and hazels and rowans, and poplars and ashes, but, above all, far out-numbering all the rest, were linden trees, fine old lindens with giant boles and long drooping branches, quite smothered in blossom, the scent of which was so strong it almost made one dizzy. Beneath the trees the grass grew so high that it reached up to the horse's knees, and in the grass grew hare-bells on long slender stalks, and oxe-eyed daises looking like new-fallen snow, and tall, stately mulleins, and from all the bushes around gleamed and glowed the briar-roses.

But when Rolf rode in under the lindens a whispering and murmuring like wind in the tree-tops filled the whole wood.

"He comes, he comes! Rolf from Örkanäs! He will surely set her free!"

And the over-hanging boughs of the linden trees tapped him encouragingly on his helmit, the

long grass bowed low before him, and every little spray leaned forward to gaze after him; the butterflies danced up and down before him, the briar-roses laughed for joy, and a sound as of a great surging sea swept through the forest.

In amongst the bushes Rolf caught sight of something so queer and white; as he rode nearer he discovered it was the skeleton of a man and his horse. It was one of the knights whom the lind-worm had done to death. When he had ridden on a little further he again saw something white in the grass; this was another skeleton of a man and a horse; and yet a third time Rolf found in the thicket the dead bones of a slaughtered knight and his horse. But in the deepest depths of the forest Rolf came at last upon the lind-worm's tower itself.

This was a tall, grey tower with only one window, ever so high up; it was so overgrown with weeds and climbing plants that it looked more like a part of the wood itself than anything else.

Rolf drew up quietly behind a hazel tree and

gazed up at this window in the tower, and there within he saw quite plainly the glint of something bright. It was the gold crown on the little princess's black hair.

But he saw no trace of the lind-worm. Then he settled himself firmly in the saddle and rode forth over the grass towards the tower; but just as he had come half way across the green sward the very ground itself seemed to heave up suddenly, and up out of the grass rose the lind-worm.

It lay in a double coil around the tower, with its neck and trunk stretched out a long way into the grass.

It now reared itself right up on end, and a gruesome sight indeed it was! It was as green as the grass in which it was lying; it was shiny and fat, with glittering scales; it had three heads, each crowned with a little coronet of emeralds, and its eyes glowed like fierce little flames of fire. It drew in its thick neck and looked at Rolf and said "Hiss—s."

Then the whole forest shook and trembled with fear.

For the first time in his life Rolf felt afraid. How was it possible to slay the lind-worm with his three heads? His horse did nothing but rear and back, and he could scarcely hold him in.

For one brief moment he really thought he would turn round and fly back through the forest. But just then he caught sight of the little princess who had stepped up to the tower window. She had heard the horse whinnying, and was now standing up there watching Rolf. She said nothing, but kept walking backwards and forwards, wringing her hands and stretching out her arms towards Rolf as if beseeching him to help her.

Then Rolf put spurs to his horse and rode down upon the lind-worm.

The monster, with all its three crowned heads, reared up towards him, but with a mighty stroke of his sword Rolf smote off one of the heads, and sent it rolling over the grass like an apple. But scarcely had it fallen when, in a twinkling, a new head grew up in its place, crown and all! and instantly the lind-worm flung itself upon Rolf, hanging with all its strength around his left

arm, which dropped as if paralysed at Rolf's side.

"Against all evil shall my sword prevail," shouted Rolf, and struck at the lind-worm so fiercely that two of its heads went spinning away over the grass.

For a moment the monster lay as if dead, but almost immediately two new ferocious-looking little heads with crowns as before shot up out of the wounds, and with a terrific leap the lind-worm came rushing on towards his foe.

But Rolf held his shield steadily before him, and at one deadly stroke he cut off all three heads at one go, and with that it seemed as if a voice whispered to him:

"Strew grass upon them! Strew grass upon them!

And before the three new heads had time to sprout up again, Rolf had snatched up a handful of grass and covered the wounds with it.

As he did this the whole creature seemed to shrivel up. It writhed and twisted and coiled and uncoiled itself once or twice and then lay dead upon the grass.

Then Rolf sprang from his horse and thrust his lance again and again into its dead body. But while he was standing there plunging his lance into the lind-worm, the princess up in the tower had fastened her long silken scarf to the window and, by its aid, had slipped down to the ground.

When Rolf looked up, she was sitting on the ground laughing.

"Yes, here I am!" she said.

So beautiful was she that Rolf had never imagined there could be anything so beautiful. . . . Her eyes were so black and her skin so smooth and her hair so dark and curly! and then she smiled so brightly and showed all her little white teeth. Rolf took her by the hand and raised her up. Then she came forward and looked down at the dead lind-worm.

"Horrible monster!" she said, and spurned him with her little foot.

"Aye indeed, but now he is dead and done for," said Rolf, "so come and I will set thee on my horse and ride home with thee to thy father's palace."

The princess looked at him.

"Oh, what a sight thou art!" she said, "all

covered with blood and dirt, and with the plumes in thy helmet all torn and bedraggled!"

"Art thou astonished at that," said Rolf, "seeing that I have but just slain the lind-worm?"

Then he lifted her into the saddle and rode forth through the forest.

"What is this wretched animal thou hast?" asked the princess. "He can neither trot nor gallop, but ambles along like a cow in the grass. I have been used to very different horses."

"Thou dost forget that my horse has fought against the lind-worm," answered Rolf. "Thank God instead, Princess, that we have escaped with our lives."

"I am so uncomfortable," said she after awhile, beginning to wriggle. "The saddle is so hard and sharp. I am used to a padded velvet saddle."

Then Rolf folded his cloak under her as well as he knew how, and in this manner they rode on silently through the forest. The grass bent low before them and greeted the beautiful princess, and all the lindens and hazel bushes rustled and whispered:

"Here he comes with her! Here he comes with her!"

And all the briar-roses peeped out from the bushes to see them ride by. At home in the palace the king was up in the tower looking out across the plains, and in the glow of evening he caught sight of Rolf riding along with the princess on his saddle-bow. Then he ordered the drawbridge to be lowered, and all the trumpeters to blow their trumpets, and went out himself to meet Rolf and lift his daughter from the saddle.

Now there were great feastings and rejoicings in the palace, because the king's daughter had been restored to him once more, and His Majesty said to Rolf:

"I stand by my word. Thou hast rescued my daughter and she shall be thine!" and thereupon the princess had to give Rolf her hand and promise to be his bride, and they exchanged vows and betrothal rings.

All the preparations for the wedding now began in the palace, for many a guest was to come, and it was the king's desire that it should be in every way a wedding worthy of princes.

There was brewing of beer and tapping of wine, there was cooking and frying and baking, so that you could tell ever so far off by the savoury smells that there was going to be a right royal feast. And robes of velvet and silk sewn with pearls and precious stones were being made for the beautiful bride.

Rolf could scarcely believe his good fortune in possessing thus a beautiful little princess for his bride, and being made the equal of princes.

One thing only he wished, and that was that his mother had been living near enough that he might tell her of his happiness and present his beautiful bride to her.

"If only my mother could see thee," he said to the princess.

"Who is thy mother?" she asked.

"Dame Brita," answered Rolf; "Dame Brita of Örkanäs."

"H'm," said the princess. She did not look particularly pleased.

During all this time Rolf had spoken very little with the princess. She had so much to think of with all the arrangements for the wedding, and

Rolf had only seen her laugh once, and that was when she sat in the grass, just after he had slain the dragon. And so the time went on, till it came at last to the eve of the wedding.

It was a warm summer evening, and when Rolf happened to pass the ladies' bower, where the princess sat sewing with all her maidens, the door was ajar, and he could hear them chatting and laughing within, but the one who laughed and chatted loudest of them all was the princess. Rolf could not help hearing what she was saying.

"To slay a dragon!" she said. "Why it only needs a man's courage and a stout sword to do that, but he should be a prince who would wed a princess, and indeed I had awaited another and a better fate than that my father should throw me away upon a fellow who has come from goodness knows where."

Then Rolf heard one of her maidens say:

"Notwithstanding, he is a brave and handsome fellow, thy bridegroom."

"Handsome!" the princess laughed outright. "Yes, handsome indeed he was when I slipped down beside him from the lind-worm's tower, all

covered with blood and dirt, and with the plumes in his helmet all bedraggled; he stood there looking like a cock in windy weather! and even now he can scarcely move his arm. See, this is what he looks like!"

Then Rolf concluded the princess was mimicing him, for all the maidens laughed aloud, and clapped their hands.

"And who are his ancestors?" the princess continued. "He has only a mother, an old woman called Brita, like old Brita down there at the foot of the hill! And she lives at a place called Örkanäs. In years to come when people ask whom the beautiful princess Hildegard married, folks will answer, 'Brita's lad from Örkanäs!'"

Then all her maidens fell to laughing and chattering again like a flock of magpies. But Rolf stood stock-still outside the door. Slowly he drew his betrothal ring off his finger and rolled it in through the door of my lady's bower. It spun round and round on the floor and flashed in the evening sunlight.

"Look, look," called out the princess, "what is

that hopping and dancing about on the floor? Jump up and catch it." And all the maidens with the princess at their head began springing after the ring.

But Rolf went down to the stable and saddled his horse. He said neither good-night nor farewell; he rode like the storm-wind across the plains and up towards the mountain.

The dragon's gorge was now clear, for Rolf himself had slain the dragon, and he now rode confidently through it. The enchanted forest was as damp and as dark as it had been when Rolf rode through it before, but he had killed all the goblins there, and it was but a short time therefore before he came out on the other side. Then he rode those many long miles, through leaf woods and pine woods and gloomy forest spruce, and at last, late one moonlight night, he saw Örkanäs glimmering white, high up on the top of the mountain. Then he gave a deep sigh of happiness, and let his horse go at a foot's pace, up and up through the forest. When he had come quite close to Örkanäs he fastened his horse to a tree, and then went slowly up to the house.

There stood Dame Brita, looking out across all those boundless forests asleep in the moonlight.

"Mother," said Rolf, "here I am home again."

Then Dame Brita turned and looked at him. She was just as young and beautiful as when he had seen her last, albeit months and years had gone by since then.

He had grown a head taller than his mother, and when she put her arms round his neck she was only just tall enough to lay her head upon his breast.

Thus they stood long, without a word. So silent was it up there that they seemed to be alone in all the world with all those mighty forests asleep below them.

That night Rolf lay in his old room up in the gable; he slept more soundly than he had ever slept since he was a child. He awoke to find the sun shining in upon him, and beside his bed stood his mother with the pewter mug filled with fresh milk. The sunbeams danced on the little red stone in her ring, and smiling brightly down on him, she said:

"Come, my boy! come, it is time once more to get up and live!"

But Rolf just lay there gazing up at his mother, and at length he said:

"Little do I care for goblins and dragons, and lind-worms and gold, and treasure and princesses! Thank the Lord I am at home once more at Örkanäs!" And so saying he drank off the milk, wiped his mouth, and kissed his mother.

All the wild waves of the sea—

Whither are you hurrying you noisy little bubbling brook?

ALL THE WILD WAVES OF THE SEA

THERE was once a poor widow who lived with her two children, Fridolf and Violanta, in a little cottage high up on the mountain-side.

The house stood amongst tall trees, but in front was a clearing whence one could see far over forest and plain, hills and dales, meadows and ploughed lands, and away on the farthest horizon gleamed a dark-blue streak, and that was the sea.

Up on the ridge where the cottage stood, a little spring welled up which, quickly growing into a little stream, hurried noisily over the stones and found its way through covert and bush to the valley below.

Here in the brook the mother washed the yarn she had spun, whilst the children splashed about in the water with bare feet, or made little boats

which they launched into the stream and sent sailing down with the current.

When the children grew bigger, they began to help their mother with work of all kinds. Fridolf carried water from the well, gathered firewood, and dug in the garden. Violanta learned to sew and spin; in winter she sat oftenest indoors at her distaff, but when the spring came she would go down to the brook and wash the wool she had spun.

Now it happened one day in spring, when she was sixteen years old, and a tall, comely maiden, that she went down as usual to the brook with her wool. She knelt on the grass and bent over the water which, rippling and gurgling over her hands, rushed noisily onwards and dashed down and away towards the fall. It seemed to Violanta as if its waters could not get away quickly enough down the mountain and out on to the plain. She knelt on there watching the white, foaming water, and at last she asked:

"Whither are you hurrying, you noisy little bubbling brook?"

Then the brook called out, "To the wild waves

of the sea! To the wild waves of the sea!" and dashed onwards.

Just behind Violanta stood a cherry tree in full bloom. When the wind played in its topmost branches the white petals would flutter down like a shower of snow into the brook and float away with the current.

"Whither away are you floating, you dainty white blossoms?" asked Violanta when she saw the flowers whirling away down the stream.

"To the wild waves of the sea, to the wild waves of the sea!" answered the cherry blossoms as they disappeared over the slope of the hill.

When it was blowing up among the fells the blue line on the horizon would become darker and darker, turning at last to a stormy blue, deep as indigo.

"What is that black line far away over there?" Violanta asked her mother one summer day.

"Over yonder are the wild waves of the sea," answered her mother.

And so another summer passed in the same way, the mother and her children living happily

together up there in the little cottage on the mountain-side.

And now all the wild roses were over and the cherries were beginning to ripen.

One day as Fridolf and Violanta were sitting together under the cherry tree beside the brook the boy said:

"Say, sister, do you think there is anywhere on earth a lovelier spot than this?"

"That I cannot tell," answered Violanta, "for I have never seen what it looks like elsewhere."

"Well at least there is no one on earth as happy as we," said Fridolf.

"Who is to know that?" answered Violanta, "for we do not know how it is with other folks."

"Yes, but every day is happy here with us," urged Fridolf, "and all the days are alike."

"Yes, all the days are alike," said Violanta, and sighed.

Just then a couple of cherries fell from the tree into the brook and were swept away down the stream.

'Whither away are you sailing?" cried Violanta.

"To the wild waves of the sea! To the wild waves of the sea," the cherries replied, and disappeared like drops of blood in the stream.

Violanta rose and gazed over the wide expanse of country below her.

The wind was blowing across the plains, and far away towards the horizon the blue streak was deepening to black.

"The wild waves of the sea! The wild waves of the sea!" said Violanta. "I too would go to them."

Fridolf laughed. "You would not leave mother and me and our dear little home up here among the cherry trees?" he asked.

Violanta did not answer, but Fridolf could see she was turning something over in her mind.

After that day she began to grow strangely quiet and liked best to sit alone beside the brook, gazing out across the wide country which lay stretched beneath her feet, and one morning when her mother and Fridolf awoke, Violanta had disappeared. They sought her everywhere; they waited for her from early morning till noon, and from noon till evening, but she did not come.

Then her mother went down to the brook and asked:

"Can you tell me, you stormy little brook, who has tempted my child away?"

"The wild waves of the sea! The wild waves of the sea!" sang the brook, and went foaming and eddying on its way.

Then the mother looked up into the cherry tree and asked:

"Will she never come back? Will my child never come back any more?"

Then the cherry tree rustled its crown of branches and whispered:

"The wild waves of the sea! The wild waves of the sea!" Then her mother and Fridolf wept, for they knew within themselves that they would never see Violanta any more.

Violenta had awakened early one autumn morning. She got up and stole out of the cottage on bare feet, and not until she was well outside did she put on her shoes. She bound a red and white kerchief about her head that the sun might not burn her too much, and then she began to run. She followed the brook as it leapt from one rocky

ledge to another until she reached the valley. Here the stream flowed more tranquilly in many a sweeping curve, winding and looping back upon itself as if it were now really bent upon seeing all it could, and on its banks long rows of willows and alders stood, looking on to see how quickly it could flow. It murmured and laughed and scattered its spray over the blue forget-me-nots, yet ever it hastened unweariedly onwards. By degrees it grew broader and deeper, flowing at last a wide river through dark, silent forests where the branches of the tall trees rustled and stirred above its waters. But Violanta still ran on, keeping always with the stream.

"I will follow it," she thought; "I will follow it wherever it goes, then I shall be sure to reach them at last, those wild waves of the sea."

And the stream grew and grew, and now it flowed onwards like a mighty river, tranquil and strong. At last it reached a wide, shining lake, and flung itself into its waters; but Violanta kept along the shore, and on the further side the river flowed out again, stronger and fresher, as

though it had gathered new strength from the waters of the lake.

And just here there was a mill. The miller who had built it had made a dam across the river, and its waters were now driving the big mill-wheels.

There was such a roaring noise of rushing water, such a rattle and din of clattering mill-wheels, that it made Violanta's head spin.

High up on the steps above the mill-wheel stood the miller himself as round and as white as a sack of flour, and beside him stood his three children as white and as round as new-baked wheaten loaves, and with eyes as black as currants. When the miller caught sight of Violanta coming running along, he called out to her:

"Whither away so early in the day?"

"To the wild waves of the sea!" answered Violanta, and was going to run on.

"Oh, stop awhile," shouted the millar; "stop awhile and rest here a little with us! No waves can be wilder than these in the river here, but see I have forced them to drive the mill-wheel and grind the corn, and everything goes on merrily here, I can tell you, both work and play."

Violanta stood still. She heard the clatter and boom of the mill-wheel; she heard them laugh and sing in the mill, and there was something so hearty and gay about it all that it made her feel happy too.

"If you will enter my service," said the fat miller from the steps, "you shall have more than enough to eat and drink and a new gown at Christmas."

"What will the stuff be like?" asked Violanta.

"Oh, that you will see when Christmas comes!" answered the miller laughing.

Violanta stood and hesitated a moment and looked across towards the tumbling, foam-flecked water of the river, but she was a little tired after having run such a long way, besides she thought the large garden which she caught sight of across the wall, and the mill itself, looked so pleasant and inviting, so she finally consented to take service with the miller.

Here at the mill the work rarely, if ever, came to a standstill. The wheel turned by day and by night, and sack after sack of the whitest flour was borne up to the mill loft. The miller was as kind and jolly as he was fat, and his wife was even

kinder and fatter than he. They were well-to-do and were kind to their servants, and the work went forward right merrily. The only ones who did not work were the children. They spent their time sitting on the sacks of flour, eating little cakes of wheaten bread, playing hide-and-seek among the sacks in the loft, or watching the wheel as it went whirring round and round in the water.

Violanta was a strong sturdy girl who worked with a will at all she had given her to do, and she was liked by her master and mistress and all the people about the mill. She was as light of foot in the dance as she was quick and ready at her work, for on Saturday evenings, when the week's work was ended and the wheel stood still, the folks at the mill were allowed to dance on the green above the rapids. Here it was fresh and pleasant beside the roaring waters, which whirled away below, whilst the lads and lassies whirled round and round in the dance above.

The first mill-hand played the fiddle. He was a captital fellow, with a merry heart and a pair of bright eyes. He would play faster and faster to see how easily and lightly Violanta could swing

around and how high she could spring, and then he would laugh and say :

"Upon my word you are smarter than the mill-wheel itself!"

When Christmas came they all received their wages and a Christmas gift into the bargain, Violanta had a pair of new shoes and the stuff for a gown, which the miller had promised her. It was good homespun with a little blue pattern like small leaves all over it; but Violanta felt disappointed. She had imagined something bright yellow with a flaming pattern, or something light with roses; but the miller's wife explained to her how strong and serviceable her gown would be, and after that she thought no more about it.

During Christmas they had merry times at the mill with dancing and fiddling and plenty of home-brewed ale and saffron buns as large as the small round air-holes in the mill.

Guests came from the neighbouring mills and farms to join in the merry-making in the evening, and all the lads who came wanted to dance with Violanta. She was so pretty and could dance like the whirlwind. The first apprentice had to play

his fiddle, but whilst he played his eyes would follow Violanta, and every time she danced past him he would send a friendly word after her. Now it happened one evening when she was dancing that her braids became loosened and her hair fell in rippling waves about her neck and shoulders. She run off to plait it afresh, and as she passed the miller's apprentice he caught the flying ends of her hair and called out:

"Just look at all the wild waves of the sea?"

"What do you mean?" asked Violanta, stopping short.

"I only mean that your curly locks ripple and wave like the wild waves of the sea," he answered gently, as he noticed how her bright face had clouded over. But his words seemed to have reminded her of something she had forgotten, and from that evening Violanta was not the same person. She went about her work more quietly and no longer danced with the same zest.

When the spring came and the bird-cherries were in flower Violanta would often go down to the green above the rapids and seat herself on the little bench under the big blossoming cherry-tree.

Here she would sit by the hour looking down at the river, and sometimes she would bend so low over the water that she could even feel the cold spray dash up into her face.

One evening whilst she was sitting there alone the miller's lad came along and asked if he might sit awhile beside her on the bench.

Yes, certainly he might, she said, and made room for him beside her on the narrow seat. He sat for a long time at first and said nothing, as if he found it difficult to tell her what he wanted to say, but at last out it came, and he asked Violanta very nicely and humbly if she could not care for him a little—nay, a great deal, be his wife in fact. The miller had raised his wages and it certainly would not be very long before he was his own master. If Violanta would promise to be his wife he would promise to make her whole life as happy as any of their dances there above the rapids. They were made for one another, so he seemed to think. Violanta looked at him astonished, even a little startled. She had never thought that she and the miller's lad were made for one another, but when she saw by his face how honestly he meant it, and

how fearful he was lest she should go away without giving him his answer, she sat on and began to think it over. And she thought such a friendship as his was by no means lightly to be despised; few could work and none could play like him. Besides she knew well enough he had a heart one could trust, but for all that she could not all in a moment as it were, say what she really wanted. So she begged him to come early next morning to the place where they were now sitting, when she would give him her answer, and with this he had to be content.

Early the next morning, before the sun was up, Violanta went down to the dancing green beside the river. The air was fresh and light. The balsam poplars were scenting the air deliciously, the grass and the bushes around had put on their first spring green, and the bird-cherries, laden with their white blossoms, leaned far out over the white, foaming waters of the rapids below. Bulfinches whistled and swallows twittered, breaking into one another's song from sheer delight, and out in the river the waves were having a mad and merry time. Dashing and whirling about they swung over the

fall and hurried onwards in stormy haste. Violanta bent so low over the water that the spray dashed up into her face. "Whither away do you hasten?" she whispered, "whither away?" "To the wild waves of the sea! To the wild waves of the sea!" answered the river, and rushed on and away.

"Ah, yes!" said Violanta aloud, and spread out her arms. "The wild waves of the sea, thither I too will go along with you." And she fastened her kerchief firmly about her head, made fast the shoes upon her feet, and began to run as fast as she could along the narrow path which led through the coppice fringing the banks of the river.

When the sun rose the miller's lad rose too, and went down to the green.

When he found that Violanta was not there he smiled and said to himself:

"She will come right enough, the sun has only just risen."

So he sat there till the noonday sun shone warm upon the water, and as she still did not come, he sighed and said again:

"She will come right enough, the sun has not yet set."

Being a Sunday, he was able to sit there as long as he liked, and as for food and drink he did not care a straw about them now, he only sat on waiting for Violanta. But when the sun set at the end of the long, clear, spring day, and the mists began to rise from the river, he wept and said to himself:

"She will never come again"; and she never did.

But Violanta followed the loopings of the river which wound its way through woodland and thicket, open country and level pastures, till it came to a long ridge of green hills, between which it slipped its winding way along.

When the river and Violanta had come out upon the other side of the hills, a magnificent tract of country lay stretched before them.

Meadows full of tall grass and fragrant flowers spread out on every side, shaded by big oaks and linden trees, and in the very middle of the loveliest meadow lay a big white house surrounded by a flower garden. All the outside blinds were drawn down, and it looked so silent and deserted that it did not seem possible anyone could be living there. But when Violanta peeped into the garden she

saw that the place must be inhabited, for everything was so beautifully kept. The lilac bushes were quite big and bunchy, so full were they of white and purple blossoms. The laburnums bent beneath their long golden chains, and all the flower beds were a blaze of bright-coloured tulips, auriculas and irises. But all the same Violanta thought it was most beautiful of all out in the meadow. The turf was as green and as smooth as velvet and quite full of scented violets. The big chesnut trees flung wide their broad branches, spreading a welcome shade around, and through the leaves came the flickering sunshine, sparkling and smiling. And here in the meadows the river flowed as gently and as silently as if it indeed wished to stay there for ever, so beautiful was it all.

And now Violanta caught sight of a lady lying in a reclining chair, reading a book beneath the shade of a big chestnut. She was tall and slender and very pale. Her black lashes cast a shadow upon her wan cheeks, and over her black hair she wore a purple veil which fell away on each side like the broad dusky wings of a night moth. Her gown was of the softest silk shot with all the

bright colours of the rainbow. She lay so still that Violanta thought at first she was asleep, but suddenly she looked up out of a pair of great, thoughtful eyes.

"Come nearer," she said in a gentle voice, stretching out her hand. It was a slender white hand on which a blue jewel shone like a star.

"Whither are you running on such a day as this?" she asked Violanta.

Violanta stood still, hot and breathless. "To the wild waves of the sea," she replied softly.

"Indeed?" said the beautiful lady, and smiled. "Many go that way but few return. Do but stay here with me instead, you can be useful to me. It is good to be here, and the longer you stay with me the more you will get to like it."

Then Violanta asked in what way she could be of service to her, for she thought it would be a delightful place indeed to stop in.

"Well, you see," began the stranger, "here I lie at my ease, comfortably and quietly under the big trees. I can see the sky and the earth and the river, and I can read of all the wonders of

nature in this book. But one thing is wanting—I cannot walk. I must always lie quite, quite still." And then she told Violanta how in the past she had always wandered freely everywhere. No forest was too dense, no mountain too steep for her. Everything in nature did she long to see and know, everything did she wish to reach and hold within her grasp. One day, whilst wandering high up on a mountain, she caught sight of a little flower she had never seen before, growing on the face of the rock. Its form was most beautiful and its colour bright blue—"as blue as the stone in my ring," she said. It grew so far out over the precipice that she at once realised it would be difficult to get, but she could not turn her eyes away from it, and her heart beat fast with longing to possess it, so she crept carefully on her hands and knees out over the edge of the precipice to pluck the flower. She was already so near that she had stretched out her hand to take it when her foot slipped and she fell—not to the bottom of the precipice, but a long way down the mountain side, and there she lay insensible upon a pile of stones. When she came

to herself she found herself lying with a broken hip. And now she added mildly, "Now I cannot even pick the flowers in my own garden. But you, little maid," she continued, "you are young and strong, you can climb up to heights I cannot reach, and penetrate into forest depths where I have never been. You shall fetch me flowers hidden away in the most secret places, and the lightest winged butterflies, and bear hither stones and crystals from the mountains, and I will tell you the most wonderful things of them all. You cannot even dream of the secrets that are written in letters of gold in the very smallest of small stones, and every flower has its own story to tell."

Violanta listened to the beautiful lady's words. Her voice was so gentle and her eyes so full of light, and about her resting-place the violets were scenting so deliciously.

"Yes," said Violanta, "I will stay. It is good to be here. But what shall I call you?" she added, "for I do not know your name."

"Call me Penserosa," answered the stranger; "I have forgotten my name."

So Violanta entered the service of the beautiful Penserosa.

Here she was not allowed to wear her coarse working dress from the mill. She had a light tunic instead, with sandals for her feet and a thin veil for her hair. She was to have nothing to burden her so that she might climb the mountains freely or penetrate into the forests. All that she found on her wanderings she took home to her mistress. Penserosa would then half raise herself on her couch beneath the chestnuts, throw back her violet-coloured veil from off her forehead, and making Violanta kneel in the grass at her side she would begin with sparkling eyes to explain to Violanta about the many treasures she had found. It was just as if the faded flowers she had picked had become fresh again, and were telling her all about the spot where they grew and what they had seen and heard from the moment they had peeped above the earth. The dead butterflies became alive once more; they whispered softly and fluttered above Violanta's head dancing the loveliest of dances. Even the stones murmured in low

wistful tones, words which Penserosa could understand and explain. Everything in nature became so new and wonderful, the earth so full of riches, the river so deep and mysterious, the sky above so boundless and so high, high up. Violanta was never weary of sitting at her mistress's feet, listening to the words of wisdom which fell from her lips. Even when Penserosa was not speaking but merely lying stretched upon her couch silently gazing into the leafy branches over her head, her eyes always seemed so full of thoughts that Violanta could not help gazing eagerly into them.

It came about just as Penserosa had said, the longer Violanta lived here the more she liked it. For it was after all only very little she could carry home to her mistress, and now she wanted to hear her explain everything, everything in the world. She wanted to learn all the secrets of nature, and for this a whole lifetime was not enough.

And thus the summer passed like a single sunshiny day. Then the roses began to fade, the leaves dropped off one by one from the trees,

the sun disappeared earlier in the day behind the the forest, but Violanta's mistress still lay undisturbed upon her sheltered couch, and Violanta brought her flowers all aglow with colour, and ripe fruit from the woods and meadows. At last one evening an icy-cold breeze swept across the river and the first withered leaves of the chestnut tree come whirling to the ground.

"Ah me," said Penserosa, and sighed; "that was winter's first greeting, now he will soon drive us away from here. The storks and the swallows and the wild geese will soon be flying away to the south," she continued, looking up at the clouds, "but you, Violanta, you will stay with me always, will you not? Promise me this."

"Always, that is no light word," answered Violanta; "I promise nothing."

"There you are right," said her mistress, looking grave, "for you would not keep your promise."

Violanta blushed; for you may very well criticise yourself but you don't like to hear others doing so.

"Why don't you think I could not keep my word?" she asked.

"I can see it in your eyes," answered her

mistress, looking deep into Violanta's eyes; "I see all the wild waves of the sea there."

"The wild waves of the sea! The wild waves of the sea!" sang the wind in the the trees above her head.

"The wild waves of the sea! The wild waves of the sea!" roared the waters of the river at her feet.

"Ah, yes!" sighed Violanta softly; "the wild waves of the sea! It is for them after all that I long. If I could but see them once! I *must* see them, I *will* go to them, all those wild waves of the sea! . . ."

Violanta awoke the next morning to find a gale blowing. The branches of the trees beat against the window panes, the river rushed stormily along, and the leaves flew like flocks of birds over the meadow.

She dressed hastily and ran out. The gusty wind caught her garments and lifted her like a leaf. She was whirled away across the open country and on into the woods. Here the wind howled in the tree-tops and ever and again a blast as from a great bassoon swept through the air,

making the giant oak-trees tremble and quake, and snapping off the twigs and branches of the forest trees.

"The wild waves of the sea!" howled the wind through the forest.

"The wild waves of the sea!" roared the river.

"Ah, yes! Ah, yes! the wild waves of the sea!" cried Violanta, and flew onwards like a wild swan, with her veil fluttering like wings behind her.

The brambles tore her clothes, she tripped over the rough ground and ran up against the trees yet on she sped in breathless haste.

From the forest she came out upon a wide heath where neither trees nor bushes grew, and here she went twice as fast as before. The storm drove her on like thistle-down nearer and nearer the sea. Her feet scarcely touched the ground, she could hardly breathe and she was blown along, half-stupefied at last, across the heath towards the long stretches of sandy waste beside the seashore. Then all at once a violent gust of wind flung her to to the ground and she lay unconscious at the foot of a sand-hill.

When she came to herself again she did not

realise at first where she was, for there was nothing but the wide sky above and all around a desolate waste; after a while she rose and went on further over the sandy ground. She saw something sparkling and blue lying beyond the sand-dunes; it was the sea. The storm had died down, and the sea was perfectly calm, vast and silent as air. As far as the eye could reach there was no trace of land; not a boat, not a sail could be seen, right away to the farthest horizon it was all one wide, sparkling, calm expanse of blue.

"*That* is not the sea," thought Violanta, "*that* must be the sky"; and she went right down to the water's edge and stuck the point of her shoe into the water. There was not the smallest movement to show that the sea was stirring. It lay like some huge animal, lying in wait for its prey.

"Is this the sea?" said Violanta again, and looked round. "Why I never thought it was like this. Shall I never, never see you then, all you wild waves of the sea!"

But all at once, right away on the horizon, it began to darken; the rim of the sea became steel blue, then coal black, and suddenly, as

if some unknown terror stirred its depths, long streaks shot shivering across the surface of the deep. A whole army of small crisping waves rolled shorewards, glistening blue like the glint of steel. Then Violanta laughed and clapped her hands: "Now, now they come! They come! all the wild waves of the sea!"

Just then a fearsome blast rent the air, and on a sudden the whole ocean, turned to indigo, uprose with a mighty roar, and in massed columns like a charging host came rolling in towards the shore.

"These are the wild waves of the sea!" said Violanta, slowly. "How grand they are to watch!" Yet a vague feeling of terror seized her, they came on so surely and in such battalions.

And now a whistling wind shrilled through the air, the waves reared up on high and stretched their necks, they changed to sea-green, to dark blue, to coal black, and as if at some mysterious command their curving tops were crested all at once with white, glistening foam. With a terrific roar they thundered in upon the beach.

"O—h, O—h!" whispered Violanta, "they are terrible, the wild waves of the sea!"

But the sea rose ever higher and higher. The waves became as tall as houses, as churches, as cathedral spires. Great deep, black hollows gaped between as they reared themselves to dizzy heights, their spiral tops flinging the white spray wide. They crouched low and reared up, they leaped forward like tigers, they roared like lions, they howled like evil spirits, they boomed, thundered and rolled towards the coast as though they would swallow up the very earth itself.

Then Violanta raised her arms in terror towards the heavens.

"The wild waves of the sea!" she cried aloud. "The wild waves of the sea! Whither shall I fly?" She turned round to flee away from them, but the sea was swift upon her. The first wave laid snares about her feet so that she stumbled and fell, the next dragged her down and away, those that followed after dashed mercilessly over her. She just uttered one cry and then she disappeared into the depths of the sea.

And all the billows hopped and danced over her, beat her and buffetted her, trampled upon

"The wild waves of the sea" she cried aloud,
"The wild waves of the sea."

her and crushed her, laughed and shrieked and howled at her.

"Do you know us now?" they called to her where she lay floating like white foam upon the waters. "Do you know us now? all the wild waves of the sea!"

The boy who could not tell a lie

The trout in the stream danced to the tunes

THE BOY WHO COULD NOT TELL A LIE

THERE was once a man who had three sons. When the time came for him to die, it was his wish to divide his inheritance between them all, but being old and weak he had forgotten how to count. When therefore he had given each of his elder sons his share he discovered there was nothing left for the youngest.

"My dear Swen," he said, "this is a nice kettle of fish! I have given your brothers all I possess, and now I have nothing left to bestow upon you but my blessing and a pair of old woollen gloves."

"Don't worry yourself about that, my dear father," replied Swen, "I am quite content with my share. An old pair of woollen gloves is a good thing to have when the cold nips your fingers, and your blessing is worth more to me than all the gold in the world."

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So Swen received the gloves and the blessing, and after this the father died. Swen now slung his bow across his shoulders, hung his sword at his side, tucked his flute away inside his jacket, and putting the gloves into his pocket took leave of his brothers, wishing them the best of good luck. Scarcely had he turned his back upon them before the brothers began to quarrel over their inheritance, but Swen went out whistling into the world to try his fortune. "How easily a fellow can march along when he has no pack on his back and not so much as a farthing-piece to weigh him down," thought Swen, and was over the brook at one bound.

Spring-time was coming. All the frozen rivers and brooks had melted and were flowing swiftly along between their steep, rocky banks, and high up above the tilled fields the first larks were carolling.

"I can trill too," said Swen, and seating himself upon a stone in the middle of the brook he played upon his flute; and so near did the birds come flying that they brushed his cap with their wings, and the small trout in the stream danced to the

tunes he played. Whenever he was hungry he would shoot a hare and roast it for himself, and if he lost his way in the forest he would make a path for himself with his sword. But in the evenings he would play for the dance in the peasants' cottages, and get in return a can of ale and a corner of the barn to sleep in over night. Wherever he wandered he hastened along with so quick and buoyant a step, and with a face so sunny and bright, that the folks who met him would turn round to look at him, and say, "That's a merry youngster for you!"

At last Swen came to the gardens of the king's palace, and there on all sides placards were posted up with "Notice" in large letters on them, stating that the king's Lord High Chamberlain was dead and that anyone who wished could apply for the post.

"Best is good enough," thought Swen; "I must try my luck here," and with this he walked straight into the royal audience-chamber. There sat the king on his throne, hot and perspiring and looking thoroughly worn out after having interviewed all the many applicants.

Beside him, on a high narrow throne, sat the princess, swinging her legs and eating cherries out of a silver basket.

"Good day, your Majesty," said Swen.

"Good day," replied the king. "Pray what is your errand?"

"I have come to apply for the post of Lord High Chamberlain to your Majesty," answered Swen. "I take it that anyone who wants to, has the right to apply."

"You think you are fit then for such a responsible post?" asked the king, stroking his long beard.

"I will tell you that when I have had a try at it," said Swen.

The king looked at the princess and the princess looked at the king, and the princess went on throwing the cherry stones on to the carpet.

"You shouldn't do that," said Swen. "They might leave stains."

"That's none of your business," replied the princess, and went on eating.

"I see you are an archer," said the king. "Can you always hit the bull's-eye?"

"I can't be sure about that," answered Swen. "No man can be sure of what he doesn't know. But at any rate I can shoot a cherry stone out of the princess's hand." And the princess had to stretch out her hand and put a cherry stone upon it. She would have liked very much to have got out of it but the king said, "No nonsense now, you've got to do it"; and thereupon she held out her hand. Swen bent his bow and away flew the arrow and stuck right in the middle of the cherry stone.

"Ugh!" said the princess, who had become quite red in the face, "that was horrid!"

But the king only sat there and smiled, then he said, "Well, Swen, what about your sword, you can wield that too, I suppose, better than any other fellow?"

"Who can make that boast?" answered Swen. "Any man can meet his master."

"You are an odd fellow," said the king. "All the others who have been here have said they could do anything, whilst you declare you can do nothing."

"No, that I haven't said," answered Swen.

"All I say is that there is one thing I cannot do, I cannot tell a lie."

"There you lie already," said the king. "Every man might lie in a hasty moment."

"Well, that is *your* opinion," replied Swen; "however, stick to your royal opinion if you like, only let me stick to mine."

Just at that minute the princess's black cat sprang along in front of the throne, whereupon Swen whipped out his short sword and cut off the very last white tuft of hair in the tip of the cat's tail.

"Oh, Pussy," said the princess, "what have they done to you?" But the cat noticed nothing at all but just went and seated himself in the sun and began licking his paws.

And now the king caught sight of the flute sticking out of Swen's coat in front.

"You play the flute, I see," said he. "You are a master of that instrument I daresay."

"Larks and chaffinches trill better than I," answered Swen; "I can, however, play a bit of a tune for you."

So Swen began to play, and the birds from the garden came flying in through the open windows

Cut off the very last white tuft of hair.

and perched around to listen. The cat blinked his eyes as much as to say, "Not so bad, not so bad for a needy-looking menial like him!" and even the flies on the window-panes buzzed softly in order to listen to him. But the princess sat with a cherry in her hand and her mouth open, forgetting to pop the cherry in, so absorbed was she in listening to Swen. When he had come to the end of his last trill, the princess said, "It was just like the ice melting, and the chaffinches twittering, and the trout dancing in the brook."

"Yes, that was just what I meant it to be," said Swen. The princess sat there looking tender and wistful with tears in her eyes, and the king asked Swen:

"What do you think of the princess, Swen? Is she not beautiful?"

"Not bad," answered Swen, "but I have seen handsomer."

Now this made the princess angry; she got up so hastily that the basket of cherries was upset, and away she hurried out of the great hall as fast as her small feet could carry her.

"You can remain in my service," said the king. "To-night you shall keep your first watch. But let us first go and eat our supper. All this business makes one hungry."

So Swen was allowed to accompany them into the royal banqueting hall, and he took his place a long way off amongst the retainers. All the other attendants and courtiers looked at him with great contempt because he was not wearing the royal livery, but only his shabby, travel-stained clothes, and they contrived that everything should be eaten up off the dishes when they came round to where he sat.

"Well, how are you enjoying your meal, Swen?" shouted the king from his throne.

"Ask those who gobble it up," answered Swen. "I only get empty glasses and clean platters."

Thereupon the king piled up a helping for him on his own golden platter and sent it down to Swen's place with a cup of wine which he had mixed himself. Now Swen ate and drank to his heart's content; afterwards he had to follow the king to his bed-chamber to keep watch outside the door until daybreak.

"Be sure to keep awake," said the king, "for he who sleeps at his post is a dead man."

The great door leading into the garden was locked, and the king took off his crown and gold chains and laid them side by side on the table before Swen, then he went into his own apartments, and it was not long before Swen heard his royal snores disturbing the quiet of the night. Swen stood there like a statue and wouldn't even sit down lest he might be tempted to sleep. There he stood and thought of every imaginable thing, whilst the night-shadows stole across the sky and the stars began to twinkle. But just as he was standing there, he was overcome with drowsiness, the like of which he had never felt before. Strange white and pale green sparks danced before his eyes, his head became as heavy as a cannon-ball, and he found it quite impossible to keep on his legs. He then tried to keep his eyes fixed steadily upon the king's crown upon the table, but as he sat and looked at it, it appeared to him to change into the most weird shapes. It seemed to become alive and to move and crawl about, and all at once he thought

it was the princess, who was sitting there eating cherries and throwing the cherry stones all the time into his eyes. "Stop that," he said aloud, and the next moment he was fast asleep.

When he awoke it was early morning. He scarcely realised he had slept at all, and he looked around him in terror. The king's crown and chains had vanished, and what was more the great door leading into the garden stood wide open. Swen knew now that he was a dead man, but when he saw that the thieves had left the great door open, he realised that if he wanted to save his life he could. Nevertheless he stuck to his post that he might be able to tell the king how it had all happened. Presently the king came out and said, "Good morning, Swen, my crown please."

"The crown has gone," Swen answered.

"Gone!" shouted the king; "give me my gold chains then."

"The chains have gone too," replied Swen.

"Impossible," roared the king.

"Nothing is impossible," answered Swen. "I slept like a dog at my post."

"Don't you know that means you are a dead man?" asked the king. "Why did you not escape when the door was open?"

"How could you have got hold of me then to chop off my head?" answered Swen. "Now I can go along with you at once."

Just at that moment the princess arrived upon the scene on her way out for her morning walk. When she saw the king's angry face she asked what in the world was the matter.

"Oh, it is only Swen who has slept at his post; and now we must go and chop off his head," said the king. But at this the princess began to sob and cry and wring her hands, and assure the king that this must have happened through some villainous trick, for she was ready to swear that Swen could never have slept at his post.

"You mustn't swear to anything of the kind," said Swen, "for if you do you swear falsely. I *have* slept, and now let us go that it may be over quickly."

But now all at once the king said:

"You are an honest fellow, Swen, and now I know you cannot tell a lie. I myself gave you a

sleeping-draught in your wine-cup last night, and opened the great door to give you an opportunity of escaping, but you chose rather to stay and face the truth."

"That was a very shabby trick of yours, your Majesty," said Swen. "You ought by right to give me compensation for this"; and he was really very angry.

"Will you take my daughter?" said the king. "I'll wager ten to one she is dying to have you."

"Thank you, your Majesty, I am greatly obliged!" answered Swen, and took the princess's little white hand which she instantly placed in his

"You would like her just as much I suppose if she were a mere beggar-maid, wouldn't you?" asked the king.

"Well, I am not so sure of that," answered Swen, scratching his head. "It is a mighty fine thing to get a real live princess!"

And so the king had a most gorgeous wedding for Swen and his daughter, and the princess was so happy she could not take her eyes off her bridegroom for a moment, and every five minutes she

would sigh and say, "Oh, I am so *frightfully* happy!"

"And yet here am I without a thing to give you for a wedding present," said Swen. "I inherited two things only from my father. The first was his blessing, and that was for me only, so I cannot give that away. But here is the other—a pair of old woollen gloves. These you can have, but you will have to darn them yourself for there are holes in all the fingers."

The Bubbly Boy

Why no fish at all
but a little sea baby!

THE BUBBLY BOY

Once upon a time there was a fisherman and his wife who lived on the shores of a wide bay. They had only one child, a little girl, who was born one day in early summer when the cowslips were in bloom, filling the woodland where the birches grew with their sweet scent. And because it happened so, they called her "Gullvifva"—"Cowslip"—but as they never had much time to spare, and the name was such a long one, they ended by simply calling her "Vifva."

Now one day when Vifva was only four years old her father went out fishing as usual. He soon had his net quite full, so full indeed that it was a tough job to draw it up.

"Goodness me! how mighty full the net must be!" said the fisherman, dragging at it with both hands till he was quite red in the face. Just then, amid the silvery piles of herrings flopping and

wriggling about in the sunshine, he caught sight of a big queer-looking fish. It was flapping its tail about and struggling to work its way up from among the herrings, and when the fisherman took hold of it, behold! what did he see! Why, no fish at all but a little sea-baby! From his head to his waist he was just like a little human baby with prominent, watery blue eyes and a big wet mouth with thick lips. He had small, chubby baby arms, and round, plump little hands, but from his waist down he was like a fish. He had no legs at all, only a thick shiny tail like a pike. He was now beating and flapping this tail of his in his efforts to get away, flinging himself about, striking out with his small hands amongst the herrings and screaming at the top of his voice with his mouth wide open.

"I'm blest if this isn't the oddest fish alive!" thought the fisherman, and drawing in his nets he started off home with his haul of fish. He picked up the little sea-baby and carried it under his arm. but this was by no means an easy task, for he wriggled like an eel and howled the whole time in a queer, hollow voice, which sounded just like some one blowing into a sea-shell.

"See here, wife," said the fisherman as he stepped inside their little cottage, "what wilt thou give me for this fine perch?" and so saying he flung the little sea-baby on to the table. His wife lifted her hands in horror but little Vifva screamed with delight, and springing forward began pinching the sea-baby's tail. But when she did this he floundered and wriggled about so violently that he fell on to the floor.

"Let it be," said the fisherman. "It is nearly dead." And indeed it really looked as if the little sea-baby would soon die, for he flapped his tail more and more feebly, giving it only one or two little jerks now and again. His watery blue eyes were half closed and looked as if they would never open again, and he lay with his mouth wide open out of which the sea-water ran and trickled along the floor. Vifva wanted to go and play with him, but her father said again, "Let the trash be. It is nearly dead."

But his wife, however, felt sorry for the poor little thing; half of him at any rate was like a human baby, and so putting him into her apron she carried him out and went with him up the hillside.

Up there between the birch grove and the pine woods lay a shadowy little forest lake, surrounded by steep banks and leafy trees which dipped their branches to the water's edge. Into this little lake the fisherman's wife slipped the little sea-baby, and scarcely did he feel the water under his tail than he darted down like a fish into the lake and disappeared in its depths.

"We needn't grudge the creature a few drops of water," said the fisherman's wife to her husband when she came home, "and we can go and look at it whenever we have a mind to." And after this they thought no more about it.

But in the evening when the fisherman was out casting his nets he caught sight of something very strange rising up out of the sea in the moonlight. He thought at first it was floating seaweed, then he said to himself, "No, it is a floating buoy"; but it was not a floating buoy either. There was a sound as of someone or something splashing and slipping through the water; it came nearer and nearer, and now the fisherman saw quite plainly in the moonlight that it was a merman and his wife, who had come swimming towards him, and

who now lay floating on the water beside his boat. Their hair was like long green seaweed, and the merman's beard was crusted with sea-shells, the scales on their tails glistened and shone in the moonlight like those of the finest herrings, and around the mermaid's neck hung six rows of sea-pearls. They both wept so bitterly that the water bubbled and gurgled around the boat, and theirs were the saltiest of salt tears, as bitter and as briny as the salt sea-water itself.

"Give me my son, give me back my little bubbly-boy again," sobbed the merman." Every day will I drive the herrings into thy nets, and when the storm wind blows I will sweep away the waves from thy boat, if only thou wilt give me back my little Bubbly-boy."

"A fig for thy Bubbly-boy," said the fisherman. "Thou mayst babble and blubber, thou old blubbering babbler, but the sea-folk's vows are like bubbles on the water and not worth a rotten herring, and as to thy youngster thou shalt never see him again."

Then the merman's wife slipped up through the water and rested her wet chin on the gunwale of

the boat. She was as pale as the moonlight glimmering on the water, and the tears from her great green eyes trickled down in two small streams into the boat.

"Give me back my little Bubbly-boy," she wailed; "every day I will lay upon the shore a wreath of the fairest water-lilies for thy daughter, and here,"— she lifted her necklace between her fingers—"see here, thou shalt have all my pearls to hang about her neck."

"Keep off the boat, thou wilt sink it with all thy caterwauling!" said the fisherman. "As to thy pearls we know well enough what sort of pearls the sea-folk offer us! When they come ashore they turn to sea foam and burn in our hands. Down with thee, thou green-eyed thing, and let me cast my nets in peace."

"Shall we never get our Bubbly-boy back again?" asked the merman, and sobbed aloud.

"That depends," answered the fisherman, "if for six years thou wilt help me to catch fish and drive back the waves from my boat, then in six years' time I will throw thee thy youngster into the sea again."

"Six years!" groaned the merman's wife, letting her hands drop with a splash into the water. "Oh, Bubble-Bubble, my Bubbly-boy!" and thus crying she dived down into the sea and disappeared; but across the wide waters of the bay came a faint whispering sound: "Do but be kind to Bubble-Bubble, be kind to my Bubbly-babe!"

But the merman said never a word. Long did he sit on the surface of the water in the moonlight, stroking his flowing beard till the shells were loosened and dropped off into the waves. He sat there following the fisherman with his gaze till he had rowed his boat to the shore.

When the fisherman came home and told his wife what had happened she was very glad she had saved little Bubble-Bubble's life, for now they had the upper hand of the sea-folk. As long as they had Bubble-Bubble in their power his parents away down in the sea would be certain to do anything the fisherman might ask of them. But Vifva's mother, who was a woman who could think of two things at the same time, realised at once that a danger threatened them too. It

would be quite natural if the sea-folks were to do all they could to lay hands on Vifva by way of revenge, and so the fisherman and his wife determined that Vifva should no longer go down to the seashore to play and paddle about in the water as she had always done. She was never allowed to bathe in the shallow pools where she loved to splash about and dash with her little bare body in and out of the water, and never again could she run down to the shore and rock in a boat, which was the greatest of all delights to her. When she went out to play she had to keep close to the cottage or go up into the little birch-wood, but sometimes her mother would take her with her when she went up to the woods near the little lake into which she had thrown the Bubbly-babe. When the fisherman's wife drew near the shore, leading little Vifva by the hand, they could see Bubble-Bubble quite plainly playing about in the water. He would turn one somersault after another till the spray dashed up amongst the branches of the fir-trees. But as soon as he heard the sound of their footsteps he would shoot down swift as an arrow into the depths, leaving

only a few spreading circles on the surface of the water, where a moment before he had been frisking about. In vain did they throw stones and call to him, he always kept himself well in hiding and never uttered a sound.

But it happened one day when the fisher-folk had fried herrings for dinner—and indeed this happened nearly every day now—that Vifva hid a few under her pinafore, and when she ran out after the meal was over, to play in the birch coppice, she stole up higher, in amongst the fir-trees and on to the little lake in the depths of the woods.

Here she lay at full length upon a flat stone by the water's edge and whispered: "Bubble-Bubble, little Bubbly-babe, come, come, and thou shalt have something so nice to eat." For a long while she heard nothing, but after calling to him for some time in her gentle little voice she noticed at last how the water began to eddy and swirl in the very middle of the lake, just as it always does when a fish rises, and first a little head bobbed up, then a little baby's body, and at last the whole of little Bubble-Bubble rose out of the water. He

kept a long way off and stared at Vifva with his round, goggly, watery blue eyes. He had just been chewing water-weeds at the bottom of the lake and a few bits of wet grass were still hanging from the corners of his mouth.

Vifva reached out over the water as far as she could. Her long golden hair hung in curly locks over her forehead and down over her shoulders. She was as red and white as a cranberry blossom, and her eyes were like two forget-me-nots. And now she began to call again in her gentle little voice, which was just like the piping of a bullfinch :

"Come little Bubbly-boy, come and thou shalt have something so very, *very* nice," and in her chubby little hand she held out one of the herrings over the water. The Bubbly-babe looked as if you could have knocked him over with a feather, so astonished was he. He held his breath and did not stir. Then all at once he began to smile a big, broad smile right up to his ears, the little bits of water-weeds fell from his mouth, and as for his eyes they disappeared altogether.

"Come, then, come. It is something *so* nice," said Vifva, and nodded to him.

Then Bubble-Bubble dashed away across the water and took the herrings in his mouth from Vivfa's fingers. He ate them up greedily one after the other, and when they were finished he ended by licking Vifva's fingers like a little dog.

"Now thou must dance for me," said Vifva, seating herself on the grass. "Away with thee! Head over tail and away little Bubbly-babe"; and then the little Bubbly-babe began to turn one somersault after the other faster and faster, and when he saw Vifva laughing and clapping her hands, he flourished about more wildly than ever, twisting and twirling and dashing about till his very tail whisked after him in the shape of an "S." Then he began to laugh aloud in strange, shrill, hollow tones. It was all such fun, and from that day Vifva and Bubble-Bubble became the best of friends. Whenever Vifva had anything nice to eat, such as a cake or a biscuit, she would hide half of it for Bubble-Bubble. She would pick raspberries and bilberries in the woods for him,

and he would come and eat them out of her hand; but all the water-flowers and blossoming reeds which Vifva could not reach Bubble-Bubble would get for her, and he would catch dragon-flies with long green wings and give them to her. There were many things Bubble-Bubble was afraid of. He was terribly frightened of the moon and stars, he felt quite scared when their bright faces were reflected in the lake for he had never been up to the surface of the water until the day he was caught in the herring net. He was afraid of the birds too, and when they flew by he would dive down into the water. But he was not afraid of Vifva. When she came he would often be lying on the shore waiting for her, having crept out of the water as far as he possibly could, and when she had seated herself on the grass or on the flat stones, he would splash up close beside her and look up at her, his mouth widening into a broad grin.

"My Bubbly-boy, my Bubble-Bubble," she would say, and pat his head.

For a long time Vifva thought Bubble-Bubble was deaf and dumb, for he never said a word but

only looked friendly and turned somersaults. But suddenly one day he opened his wide mouth and said "Vifva," which sounded more like a frog croaking than anything else, and in this way he began to learn the language of mortals. He could soon say "nice, nice" and "thank you," and "fine day," and other similar useful and sensible things, but he never talked much, liking best to listen to what Vifva had to tell him.

And thus they played most happily together, and when the fisherman's wife had to help her husband or had other things to do she would often say:

"Go up now and play with the Bubbly-boy, and take with thee a couple of herrings to throw to him." And then Vifva would run off at once.

In this way the summer passed, but when late autumn came, and then the winter, it was all quite different, for as soon as the first frost had laid his icy grip upon the waters of the little forest lake Bubble-Bubble could not come up to the surface any more. All the same, when he saw Vifva coming down to the shore, for he could see her through the thin ice as through a window, he struggled to

come up, making his head and hands bleed with his efforts to break through the ice. Then Vifva cried about it to her father, and the fisherman kept an ice-hole open all the winter on the little lake up in the woods; for Bubble-Bubble's life had become of great importance to him, because there would have been an end to the sea-folk's protection if any harm had come to the sea-babe.

Vifva was not afraid of snow and storm. She went up at least once a day to the little forest lake in all weathers to see her little friend, and take him food. She even wanted to give him a pair of old woollen mits, but at this he laughed, and said, "Ugh! nasty!" when they got wet, which they did at once of course.

The little lake, too, lay so well sheltered in amongst the overhanging crags and great forest trees that as soon as the spring sun began to shine, it was nice and warm up there, and cowslips were earlier in flower under the birches on the south shore than anywhere else. One day in early spring Vifva wove a broad wreath of cowslips for her hair, and came running out of the wood towards the lake, and when Bubble-

Bubble caught sight of her he leaped right up like a salmon with sheer delight, and turned a somersault backwards in the sunshine.

And thus they played together like the best of friends. But as time went on they grew bigger and began to alter, each in his and her own way. Vifva was no longer the plump, chubby little thing she was when first she used to toddle up to Bubble-Bubble in the little forest lake. She was now a tall slender little maid and her golden hair reached below her girdle. The Bubby-babe had become a dark-haired, brawny little fellow with a tanned skin. His eyes were no longer a watery blue and full of wonderment, they had become much darker, like the colour of the waves when the shadows chase each other over the water, and to look into them made one think of the sea. His mouth was still big and wide, but when he smiled at Vifva she thought no mortal who walked on two legs upon the earth looked so kind and good as her friend with the fish's tail. Their games too were now of a quieter kind. When Vifva came Bubble-Bubble no longer turned somersaults with delight, but would swim

hastily to the shore and lie close to the bank where Vifva would be sitting. He had made himself pipes out of reeds bound together with grass, and on these he would play the most wonderful tunes. Sometimes they were like soft winds whispering through the rushes, or the murmuring of the waves upon the sea-shore, but often his piping would be so full of mirth and melody that it was just like the sunshine, sparkling and dancing on the surface of the water. Vifva had the sweetest of voices, she could yodel and lilt and sing the prettiest runs, with octaves and quavers and shakes. She knew as many songs as there were days in summer, and whilst she sat on the rocks and sang Bubble-Bubble would lie in the water at her feet and play upon his pipes.

He had now learnt the language of mortals, but he only talked to Vifva and she knew no other than kind and gentle words.

"Dost know," she said one day to Bubble-Bubble, "that when thou has been here six years my father has promised to cast thee back into the sea where thou didst come from?"

He would play the most wonderful tunes.

"I care not for the sea," said Bubble-Bubble. "Here will I always stay, in my own little lake, and never, never be parted from thee, Vifva."

"And yet it must be so," said Vifva. "If thy parents do not get thee back again great ill-fortune will befall my father. He has given his word and he must hold to it."

"But thou wilt come, too?" said Bubble-Bubble, and caught Vifva's golden hair between his hands; "say, wilt thou not spring into the sea after me?"

"Thou foolish little Bubbly-boy," said Vifva. "We mortals cannot live in the sea, we sink to the bottom and die. We have only two legs and no fine tail to swim with like the children of the sea."

"I don't care a rush for my tail," said Bubble-Bubble, looking down sorrowfully at it. "I would much rather have two small feet like thine, and run about with thee in the meadows and woods, and pick hazel nuts."

Meanwhile the day drew near on which the fisherman had promised to cast Bubble-Bubble back into the sea. It had fared well with him

all these six years. Every morning he found his nets full of herrings, and when the storm winds blew, his boat sped along lightly as a cockle-shell over the waves, which seemed to curtsey low and make way for it. He well understood, of course, whom he had to thank for all this, and now he began to think it might be doubtful whether the merman would continue to trouble himself about him when he had once got his son back again. He spoke about it to his wife and she said: "Thou wilt be a big fool if thou cast the sea-youngster back into the sea. Dost thou not see what a hold we have over them down there in the water, as long as they know he is in our power? No, no, let them wait! Besides, a promise made to such folks as these thou needst not be too squeamish about." And so the fisherman resolved to keep Bubble-Bubble a while longer.

One night, exactly six years to the very day on which the fisherman had had speech of the sea-folk, there was the most brilliant moonlight. The sea was as smooth as glass, and as the fisherman was casting his nets he noticed that

just where the moon was reflected like a burnished shield upon the sea, the waters were beginning to surge and roar, and all in a moment the sea-folk rose up out of the waves.

The merman had a crown of sea-weed on his head, and wore on his shoulders a mantle ornamented with glistening sea-shells, and the merman's wife had on a robe of white sea-foam bespangled with silvery sea-dew, while over her hair floated a veil of filmy mist inwrought with the rays of the moon.

"Now," cried the merman to the fisherman, "*now* the hour has come! Give me back my son, my Bubbly-boy."

The fisherman pretended not to hear and went on busying himself with his nets. Then the merman's wife said in a sorrowful voice, "Give us back our son, our Bubbly-babe, again."

"Quietly," said the fisherman, standing up in the boat, "quietly now. Your son is happy up here with us, we don't want him to go, and he himself wants to stay a while longer up there in the forest lake. There is surely no great hurry.

Take a dip in the sea, good folks, and calm yourselves. He is not coming yet awhile."

"So it is *thus* that mortals keep their vows!" cried the merman.

"May all miseries and misfortunes be heaped upon thy head," shrieked the merman's wife.

"It may hap in the future that the herring shoal will find its way elsewhere rather than to thy nets," hissed the merman.

"No one of all my mermaidens but shall help me to sweep the waves across thy boat," cried the merman's wife. "Storm and lightning shall smite thee and slay thee! The waves shall hunt thee and harry thee, crush thee and smother thee and hide thee for ever," shrieked she.

"Ye may shriek as much as ye will," said the fisherman, quietly casting out his nets. "But if I see ye are not helping me in all things as before, but trying instead to upset my boat, well then, I'll just hang your precious sea-treasure that very same day on the first fir-tree that comes handy, up there beside the lake, where he is now splashing about with the best of them."

The merman's wife uttered such a wild, weird,

long-drawn shriek of woe that the fisherman felt really scared, and even the lighthouse far out on the rocks blinked his eye with terror.

"Stop thy hideous howling," shouted the fisherman, "no harm shall come to your son as long as ye please me in every way, and in six years' time ye shall see him at the bottom of the sea again as sure as I am standing here—" "And lie!" shrieked the merman's wife.

The fisherman's only answer was, "Do as ye please. But if ye have any hearts, remember your son's life depends upon yourselves."

Then the sea-folk uttered such a fearful cry that the moon hid herself behind a cloud, so terrified was she. When she looked forth again they had disappeared into the depths of the sea.

But that night there arose the most violent storm. The sea thundered and raged as if all the spirits of evil had been let loose. The waves rose so high that they hurled themselves against the very windows of the fisherman's cottage, and those within could get no sleep.

"What can be the matter?" asked the fisher-

man's wife, staring out into the night where the sea was raging.

"Oh, it is only the sea-folk," answered the fisherman. "They are savage because they can't get their own way all at once. It doesn't agree with them, and they are dreaming bad dreams in consequence. But never fear, the sea will soon be calm again."

For three days and three nights did the storm rage, then the sea became calm once more, and the first time the fisherman cast his nets, he had them fuller than ever.

Now it happened one day that Bubble-Bubble and Vifva were sitting beside the little lake, chatting together. Bubble-Bubble had brought up from its depths a few small shells and had laid them out on the bank. "But these are not beautiful," he said, "not nearly beautiful enough for my dear Vifva. I remember when I was quite little and sat at the bottom of the sea, I played with big rose-red shells my mother gave me. If only I could get hold of one of those!"

"Yes, but how can we manage it?" asked Vifva. "Alas! I cannot go down to the bottom of the sea

to fetch them, for then I should die, and never, never come again to play with thee."

"No, but thou canst go down to the shore and call my father, and when he comes say to him, 'Bubble-Bubble is longing for sea-shells, some of those big ones, the rose-red ones, those loveliest of sea-shells which his mother dear gave him to play with when he was a little sea-babe, shells with the sound of the sea and the roar of the surge in them and which say, "Wh-o-o! Wh-o-o! How the sea rages when the storm-wind blows!"'"

Yes, indeed, she would do this, Vifva said, and so anxious was she to get Bubble-Bubble what he longed for that she completely forgot she had been forbidden to go down to the shore, but just ran thither as fast as she could.

When she had come right down to the sea, she ran out on to a long row of flat rocks lying in the water, and stepping on to the very furthest one of these she called out, "Merman! Merman! Bubble-Bubble's father, come hither, come!"

When she had called out three times the water began to bubble up in a strange and fearsome way,

and up from the deep rose the merman with sea-weed in his hair and sea-shells upon his beard. When he caught sight of Vifva with her long, golden hair, standing there with the sunlight full upon her, he laughed and showed all his big teeth.

"Bubble-Bubble begs for sea-shells, those that grow at the bottom of the sea, the big ones, the rose-red ones, the ones with the sound of the sea and the roar of the surge in them, and which say 'Whish-ho-o! Whish-ho-o! How the sea rages!'" cried Vifva. Then the merman nodded slowly and dived down into the deep, but in a short space he was up again with both hands full of great big rose-coloured shells, looking just like the most delicious fruit. "Shi-sho-sha-shu," he said, and held out a handful to Vifva, smiling in a friendly way and showing all his teeth.

Vifva stretched out her hands eagerly for the shells, but at that very moment the merman tossed them all into the sea, and they fell like a shower of rain upon the water, then in a twinkling he seized Vifva by the waist and held her fast. She screamed as loudly as she could, but he breathed

over her face and over her mouth and eyes and neck, and as he did so a thin white film spread all over her, and she became insensible. Then the merman dived down with her into the depths of the sea.

When he had reached the bottom he laid Vifva down on a bank of sea-grass, and for a long time she lay there and slept. Then after a while the merman swam towards her and breathed once again over her, the thin white film fell away, and she opened her eyes and found she could both see and live in the depths of the sea.

At first she thought she was dreaming, and went on trying to wipe the water out of her eyes, then all at once she realised where she was, but she was not in the least afraid.

"Oh, *of course*, I am at the bottom of the sea!" she said. "Here, where my dear little Bubble-Bubble was born. Now I shall just see every single thing there is to be seen down here so that I may tell him all about it when I come up again."

She could not of course swim like the sea-folks, for she had no tail like theirs, but two of the

mermaids carried her between them in a golden chair, and in this way they would rush along with her through the water. Down there in the deep everything was so wonderful, so big and so light, with such infinite space all around. When the sun was shining above, everything in the depths of the sea would glisten and gleam like melted precious stones, but when clouds sailed across the sky, then everything down below in the sea became so cool and shadowy and mysterious. The sea, too, was never the same from one moment to another; it was for ever changing, changing to all the shifting colours of the rainbow, for ever reverberating with the eternal music of the waves. Sometimes it would sound mighty, tempest-filled chords, and again it would murmur in wondrous and enchanting harmonies, and at other times again, clear and low and restful would be its song. It was more alive than anything Vifva had ever known up above on the earth. It would flame up into light, and die down into shadowy darkness; it would sparkle and gleam, murmur and sing and whisper its secrets from morning till eve. At night Vifva slept upon a bed of seaweed, and still

in her dreams she would hear the wondrous music of the deep.

But she was not always at the bottom of the sea. The mermaids would often carry her up to the surface of the water and dance upon the waves with her. Up there, rocked gently and securely in the mermaidens' arms, with the smooth glittering waters of the bay stretching away around her, she would feel as if she herself were some happy wave and laugh aloud with glee. But when the storm raged and the sea rose mountains high, the mermaidens would set her upon a rock far from the land, and then they would leap and tumble about her and show her the games they played far out at sea. They would dance ring-dances, round and round about, and leap high up into the air till the sea water dashed up in a great fountain of spray about them. They would stand now on their heads, now on their tails, till you could scarcely say which was uppermost, tail or head; then they would shout and laugh so loudly that passing ships would set all sail and hastily make for port. From out here in the sea the land looked so flat and

insignificant. The hills were just like low dikes, the tallest fir-tree in the forest looked no bigger than a little stake sticking up on the shore, and the fisherman's cottage seemed a mere toy, which one alone of those mighty waves could have shivered to atoms.

But the sea! How big and mighty and boundless it was! Never the same, and unlike anything else in all the world, and Vifva began to love the sea and forget the land.

It was true she thought now and then of her parents, and she thought still oftener of little Bubble-Bubble and longed for him, but when she spoke of him to the merman and his wife they would answer:

"He will be coming very soon, he will be coming in six years' time, and six years are no more than the heave and the toss of a single wave out here in the sea." And Vifva would rest content with this, and turn again to listen to the surging of the tides.

Now at home in the fisherman's cottage they had missed Vifva the very day she had disappeared. They looked for her at first by the little lake

where she was always sure to be found if she had been long away, but she was not there, and that she had not been there for a long time they could tell by the frightened look on Bubble-Bubble's face. He had swum right out to the shore, and was lying with his head in his hands, staring out towards the woods whence he expected Vifva to return.

At length it occurred to the fisherman to go down to the shore. Something told him the merman had now avenged himself, and sure enough at sun-down he caught sight of the merman in the water, leaning against a rock not far from the shore, and looking towards the cottage.

"Good even to thee, merman," said the fisherman, "thou are the very person I would have speech with."

"At thy service," answered the merman, combing his beard with his long brown fingers. "What may thy business be?"

"Well, nothing more or less than about my own daughter," said the fisherman. "Hast thou seen ought of Vifva?"

"Her of the gold hair?" said the merman. "Yes,

maybe I have seen her. I even saw her a minute ago. She was sitting at the bottom of the sea stringing pearls upon sea-grass."

"Then just thou give her back to me at once," shouted the fisherman. "At *once*, dost thou hear, or——"

"Or what?" asked the merman, cocking his crown of seaweed and folding his arms with an air of malicious triumph.

"Or I'll hang thy son on the first fir-tree that comes handy," yelled the fisherman. "I tell thee it is easily done."

"It is easier still to smother thy daughter in a wave," said the merman.

"All right then, thou shalt have thy precious son again," shouted the fisherman, "tail and all. I will fetch him this very evening in a beer-barrel and heave him into the sea."

"Do not give thyself the trouble," answered the merman calmly. "I fancy thou didst say but a short while since it was to be a matter of six years. I like folks to be precise about their promises. Thy first promise thou didst break and didst postpone the appointed time. Now thou

shalt not be too hasty in hurrying on the day. In six years I shall expect my son, and for six years I shall keep thy daughter. On midsummer day six years hence I will set her ashore outside thy cottage door, at the very moment my son is cast into the sea. There should be method in all things."

"Old sea-cat! Vile sea-goblin! Out upon thee!" yelled the fisherman, threatening him with his boat-hook. But the merman sat quietly there laughing and showing all his teeth.

The fisherman changed his tone. "My good man of the sea," said he, "my very good sir, honoured captain of the deep, art thou sure thou canst not let us have Vifva back now at once? Wouldst thou not like to have thy son restored to thee this very day?"

"I would like it well enough," answered the merman, "but there is one thing that I like better still, and that is revenge. *That* I like beyond everything!" and with that the merman laughed so fearsome a laugh that the fisherman felt quite creepy all down his spine.

"In six years' time," the merman shouted again.

"In six years' time thou shalt have thy daughter back again, safe and sound—that is to say, of course, as long as thou wilt look well to my son, for if the slightest harm should befall him . . . well then thou knowest . . . one wave, and it is easily done." Just at that moment a long curling comber rolled in upon the beach with the rattle of pebbles and a flying fringe of foam, and the merman and the setting sun dropped together into the bay.

While Vifva was spending her days down in the depths of the sea, Bubble-Bubble lay in the waters of the little forest lake gazing up through the trees and wondering why she never came.

For a long time the fisherman's wife told him Vifva had gone on a journey, but as the days and weeks went by she had to speak the truth at last and tell Bubble-Bubble how Vifva had sunk into the depths of the sea and was not to come up again for six long years. When he heard this Bubble-Bubble crept away to the bottom of the lake, and for six days he gave no sign of himself. But hunger drove him up to the surface of the water at last, for in that little lake there were scarcely

any fish, and besides he had grown accustomed to food such as mortals eat, and so the fisherman's wife carried food up to him just as Vifva used to do, and tried to make life as bearable as possible for him. She had heard from the fisherman of the merman's threat, how it depended upon their treatment of Bubble-Bubble whether Vifva should return to them again, safe and sound. Both she and the fisherman went up to the lake whenever they had a moment to spare, always taking something with them for Bubble-Bubble. When they knew they would not have time for some days to come up to the wood, they would set a trough full of herrings upon the bank, that he might not lack anything whilst they were away, so that at any rate Bubble-Bubble was not left to starve. He could keep himself clean too for he had the whole lake to wash in, but beyond this he had nothing. The fisherman and his wife, it is true, spoke a few words to him when they came up to see him, but they could not play with him nor sing for him, and what was worst of all, they did not care a pin about him but only looked after him because they were afraid of the merman.

It was quite another thing when Bubble-Bubble had his own dear Vifva as a play-fellow. She loved him as much as if he had been her own brother and shared joy and pain alike with him. She was so beautiful to look at too. The fisher-woman was anything but beautiful, she was as skinny and as shrivelled as an old herring, and she always smelt of fish.

With every year that passed Bubble-Bubble became quieter and graver. He grew bigger and bigger, and his fish's tail grew as well of course; he became long and thin, and had long black hair and most melancholy dark blue eyes. He spent most of his time lying close to the shore, playing on his pipes all the tunes he had heard Vifva sing with many a one of his own besides; sometimes, too, he would lie looking up into the tree-tops and watch the silver birches gently swaying, and the aspens trembling and shivering, and listen to the wind sighing in the tops of the fir-trees.

The trees in the forest were his best friends.

"How she must long for you all, you beautiful trees!" he would say to himself; "poor little Vifva down there in the big cold sea, there where no

cranberries and no briar-roses grow!" and then he would weep, for it weighed so heavily upon his conscience that Vifva had gone down to the sea because of him; for mermen have consciences too like other living creatures. Then he began to count the days and weeks to the time when Vifva would come home again, and as he had no almanack he hit upon a plan of setting out a little pebble on the shore for every day that passed, and he knew that when he had placed there six times three hundred and sixty-five stones, then the happy day would have come when they were to see each other again. He never for a moment thought that just on that very day he was to be cast into the sea.

For Bubble-Bubble each one of the days in those six years was as heavy as lead, for Vifva each day slipped by as lightly as a wave.

And so at last, six years to the very day on which Vifva was dragged down into the sea, the midsummer day dawned when she was to be set on land again. The fisherman had gone up to the little lake early in the morning with a hand-cart, on which he had placed his biggest barrel full of

water, and into this he and his wife lifted Bubble-Bubble. They had twisted together a garland of oak leaves for his dusky head, and had hung another across his shoulders. When they came to the shore they lifted him into the boat, which was all decked out with birch branches and red peonies; for it was midsummer day, and poor fisher-folk, too, like to see something of all the fresh green, mother-earth puts on at midsummer.

There lay Bubble-Bubble with his chin on the gunwhale of the boat gazing out upon the sea, from whose depths Vifva was to rise.

It was the brightest of sunny days. Sky and sea were so blue, melting one into the other in the distance that it was difficult to say which was which. And over the whole surface of the water little curling, bobbing waves skurried along after each other, for all the world like a great crowd of folks all astir and eagerly awaiting some grand event.

And now, far out at sea, the waters were beginning to heave! The sea thundered and roared, and behold! up from the deep rose the sea-king's festal train.

At the head of the procession came three

trumpeters. These were three young lords of the sea who rode upon prancing sea-horses and blew on big conches till their cheeks puffed out like sails before the wind. Then came the merman and his wife arm in arm. She was dressed in sheeny, green seaweed sewn with sea-pearls, and wore corals round her neck. He was in full dress uniform, that is to say, he wore a green belt ornamented with mussel shells, a chain of yellow amber and amber earrings, and he carried a huge trident in his hand. Behind them followed a great train of sea-folk, mermaids in veils of white sea-foam with garlands of water lillies on their hair, and mermen in wave-wrought mantles of blue and green with rossettes of blossoming sea-weed on their tails. They came dancing two by two in front of the triumphal car now moving swiftly over the waves. Six snorting dolphins drew the enormous rose-coloured sea-shell, and in this stood Vifva. She wore a sea-blue veil, woven of the foam-fringed waves and glistening with a thousand crystal drops caught from the sea-spray. Her long curling golden hair floated about her shoulders and streamed out like sunbeams behind

her. Following the car of state came all her retinue of dancing sea-maidens, who played upon silver harps and blew on long slender crystal flutes, whilst small sea-lads and lassies frolicked about them all the time, twisting and turning top over tail like dolphins; and high up in the air a flock of white sea-mews streamed like a cloud across the sky in the wake of the procession.

Bubble-Bubble lay in the boat and gazed out upon the sea and upon Vifva. She greeted him with a smile as bright as the sun itself as she came gliding over the waves.

"Art thou come? Art thou come at last?" he called, and held out his arms to her. Nearer and nearer the shore she came, and now she had set her foot upon the big rock just below the fisherman's cottage. Bubble-Bubble half rose in the boat to turn towards her, but just at the very moment when Vifva stepped ashore, the fisherman tipped the boat up so violently on one side that Bubble-Bubble slipped over on the other into the water, and as quick as a flash the sea-folk had hold of him and dragged him down to the bottom of the sea.

Yes, Vifva was indeed home once more, and her parents could not find words enough to express their astonishment at finding her so tall and so beautiful. Her eyes were as blue as the sea on a summer's day, her step was so graceful, her voice so musical, and her golden hair fell in such a cloud of brightness about her that she seemed to be wrapped in light itself.

"We have got a real princess home again," said the fisherman, standing with his cap in his hand.

"Is it there we live?" asked Vifva, looking round. How very, very small and cramped it is! I feel as if I could scarcely breathe for lack of air. I don't remember our cottage being so small. And Bubble-Bubble, where is Bubble-Bubble?" She had not seen him disappear into the sea.

"He will be back quite soon," answered her mother. "His parents want to see him and talk to him a while"; and in this way they tried to turn her thoughts to other things.

She wanted to see the garden and the meadows and go up the hill-side to the little lake, but everywhere she went she was very quiet.

"How small everything is!" she repeated; "I

can scarcely breathe." The only place she cared about was the little forest lake, where Bubble-Bubble had lived and where they had played together, but this, too, she thought had shrunk to half its size and become miserably small.

"The very tiniest room down at the bottom of the sea is bigger than that little thimbleful of water," she said. "It is no bigger than the sea-queen's mirror."

Every day she asked the same question: "Isn't Bubble-Bubble coming soon?" and at last they were obliged to tell her it were best for her to forget him altogether, for now indeed the sea-folk were scarcely likely to let him go again. Then Vifva's eyes lost their brightness and she neither sang nor laughed any more. She only sat and thought and thought how she could manage to see Bubble-Bubble again, her play-fellow from childhood.

She was not allowed to go down to the sea-shore, for the fisherman lived in constant fear lest the sea-folk should seize her again; besides, she knew now that no mortal could live at the bottom of the sea if the sea-king himself had not first breathed

over him. She wanted therefore to have Bubble-Bubble up there on the land with her instead.

And as to Bubble-Bubble himself, he indeed could think of nothing else. He swam about like a shadow at the bottom of the sea, and could not rest either by day or by night. The eternal glitter and glance of the waters were a torment to him, and the ceaseless music in the depths of the sea made him so restless and uneasy that he often burrowed deep down into the sandy bottom to get away from the sound of it. He would think of the stillness up there beside the little forest lake, of the fragrant silver birches, and the warm, sweet-scented odours of the pine-woods. He would shut his eyes from the sight of all those blue waves, swaying and murmuring so entrancingly around and about him, and think of the briar-bushes now smothered in roses, and of the hilly slope with its wild strawberries, where Vifva was now wandering, and picking the berries, and then he would weep bitter salt tears such as only a sea-lad with a fish's tail can weep. He was never allowed to swim to the shore, but now and again he had leave to rise to the surface of the

water and look towards the land. Then he would lie for hours in the sunshine, gazing towards the forest where a tall fir-tree towered up above the rest. He knew it well: "Away behind that fir-tree lies my beloved lake," he would sigh, "and there Vifva is wandering all alone!"

And indeed Vifva was nearly always up there beside the lake. Since they would not let her go down to the bay, she would not look upon it. She longed so much for the sea that her heart burned within her, and every breath she drew was pain to her.

"If only I had Bubble-Bubble here," she sighed, "then we could talk of the sea and of all the wondrous things there below; and who knows, perhaps he might one day learn the secret of how to carry me alive to the bottom of the sea!"

She left the strawberries untouched where they grew, she let the flowers wither without plucking one. There was nothing she cared about.

Sometimes she would stand on the hill and gaze out across the bay, and then she would fancy she saw Bubble-Bubble far out in the sea, but it was

just as likely to have been a sea-mew, riding on the waves.

And Bubble-Bubble would look towards the land and wonder if that were Vifva's long golden hair, glistening up there on the hill-side, or if those were but sunbeams he saw glinting across the pastures.

Thus the whole summer passed, and autumn came. It had rained a good deal towards the end of the summer and all the brooks and rivers were full to overflowing. From the little forest lake too there flowed a stream down to the sea. It had a long way to go. First through the deep forest and then along a broad wooded dale away to the sea. All through the early summer it had been quite dry, and one could walk in the bed of the stream as if it were a road-way. But now, after the heavy showers of rain, it was fast filling up and was hurrying on its way, gurgling and foaming. down to the sea from the little lake up in the woods.

"That little brook finds its way down to the sea," thought Vifva. "Wouldn't it be possible to find one's way from the sea up here?" If she

could but speak with Bubble-Bubble just once! But how was she to manage it?

Now it happened one day there was a great storm raging, and the sea-folk were all occupied in dancing about a foundering ship far out at sea. The fisher-folk, too, were all busy dragging their nets and boats to land, and Vifva, watching her opportunity, sprang as fast as she could along the shore to a little bay where it was always more sheltered than anywhere else.

"Bubble-Bubble," she called through the storm. "Bubble-Bubble, come up. It is I, Vifva, calling."

Bubble-Bubble was floating below in the deep lonely and sorrowful—for never would he share in doing harm to mortals like the rest of the sea-folk — and listening through the roar of the storm he thought he heard Vifva's voice. He ventured up to the surface of the water, and when he saw that all the mermen and maidens were a very long way off he swam as fast as he could towards the shore.

"Vifva, my dear Vifva, is it indeed thou?" he called to her.

"Yes, yes, yes," she called back to him.

"And dost thou know we can never, never be together again?" he answered in sorrowful tones. "My father has declared thou shalt never again return alive to the bottom of the sea. He hates thy father and mother and thee and all the children of men."

"If this be so, then thou must come to me," said Vifva. She could now talk in lower tones for Bubble-Bubble had swum close up beside her.

"Listen," she said, and bent as far over the water as she could. "When once this storm is over thou must swim up the stream which empties itself into the bay a long way from here. I know whither its windings lead, and if thou do but follow it, thou wilt come at last to our little lake in the forest. Up there, none shall take thee from me, and none shall find thee, and we will live together as happily as when we were children. Wilt thou come, Bubble-Bubble?"

"*Will* I come!" he echoed. "As sure as I live I will, for truly I cannot live without thee."

"But the way is difficult," said Vifva. "Thou wilt have to swim against the current the whole way."

"If I can but reach thee I will gladly swim against the raging waves themselves," he answered.

"When the storm is over then, set out on thy journey, and three days later I will wait for thee up beside the lake."

"Thou wilt not need to wait till the sun sets on the first day before I am with thee," said Bubble-Bubble, and then they parted, for he could tell by the rush and roar of the waters that the indwellers of the sea were returning from the shipwreck.

When the storm was over, the sea ran high for two days longer, then the strength of the waters abated, and all became calm again.

The sun came out once more and shone brightly down upon the forest in all its gay autumn tints. The water was high in all the lakes and water-ways, and little brawling brooks, white with foam, hurried noisily away down over the heights.

It was quite early in the morning, and the sea-folks were still asleep when Bubble-Bubble rose up to the surface of the water and swam towards the shore. He followed the coast until he came to the mouth of the river which Vifva had spoken

about. Here the land was flat and the stream broad, flowing with scarcely a ripple into the sea. The first reach of the river was not difficult to swim in, for the valley spread out, wide and level on either side, and Bubble-Bubble's greatest fear was that some one might see him from the sea and follow in pursuit. He kept close in therefore to the margin of the stream, where the reeds hid him from sight. But further inland there was a big bend in the river, and the trees now began to grow more closely along its banks so that Bubble-Bubble felt secure from the sea-folks. Now he had only mortals to fear.

It was still early in the morning, and he swam as fast as he could till he reached the forest. The oaks had already begun to turn a golden-brown, the leaves of the ash-trees were now a faded green, and the rowans and aspens had leaves as red as blood. But the leaves of the maples were of every hue and shade and very bright and gay they looked in the sunshine. Here the stream began to get narrower until, deep in the forest, it became just a little foam-flecked brook. But Bubble-Bubble had not reached thus far. He stopped

now for a moment, being hot after his hasty journey, and with gladsome heart he breathed in the earthy smell of autumn leaf-woods, and the sweet scent of the pines.

"Oh, you beautiful, you blessed, blessed trees!" he exclaimed, stretching out his arms to them. "How glorious it is to be in the forest again, the warm, silent forest, far away from the cold, fearsome sea," and then he began once more to swim up through the woods.

But this was no easy task, for the stream wanted to get down to the sea, and Bubble-Bubble wanted to get up to the hills and the cruel, rushing waters beat against his breast and tried to drag him along with them. Then he kept once more close in under the banks of the stream where the current was not so strong, clinging to the bushes and trees growing by the river's edge, and he often had to stop and rest on the stones to recover his breath.

The forest grew denser and denser and the sun shone brightly down over the trees in their autumn dress. No other sound was to be heard but the waters of the stream, dashing noisily downwards with a tinkling sound like ringing metal.

It became more and more difficult to work up against the stream and Bubble-Bubble had to stop every minute to rest; however, he would think to himself, "Vifva is waiting for me up there in the stillness of the forest. And there we shall live together and be happy for ever"; then on he would swim again with renewed strength.

Suddenly, the sound of a horn rang through the depths of the forest. The huntsmen were out to hunt the elk. There was a rustle of branches in the thicket, the hounds broke cover, with their tongues lolling out of their mouths, and behind them the whole hunting train armed with bows and spears swept along. Bubble-Bubble lay quite still under the alders, but the stream flung itself so violently upon him that he was forced to move. He swam forward a few strokes to take shelter beneath an over-hanging rock, then he heard a huntsman cry:

"An elk! An elk! It has cast itself into the stream there under the alder bushes!"

Bubble-Bubble flung himself down and crept in among the bushes as quickly as he could, but he could hear the huntsmen plunging down into the

thicket just above him. Then an arrow whizzed through the air, another followed swift upon it, it struck Bubble-Bubble at the back of his neck and pierced his throat. He slipped and fell, and in a moment the waters of the stream had seized him and whirled him away down the ravine. They tossed and flung his dead body from one rocky ledge to another. Then they floated it down to the valley, and Bubble-Bubble was borne like a withered leaf on towards the coast and out to the open sea.

Here the waves took him; they cradled him in their arms and bore him gently onwards, then the sea-folk found him and buried him at the bottom of the great deep.

But Vifva sat and waited.

She waited three days, she waited six, and as Bubble-Bubble never came she thought she would follow the windings of the brook and go in search of him, and so she sprang into the forest, wandering the whole way beside the stream which rippled along, foaming and bubbling as gaily and as innocently as if it had never seen anything sad

in all its life. In one spot Vifva thought she saw blood in the water, but it was only the blood-red autumn leaves which had dropped into the stream.

And thus she hurried onwards, down the mountain-side, through the valley, and out on to the seashore, but no Bubble-Bubble was to be seen anywhere. "Bubble-Bubble, my Bubble-boy, why, why dost thou not come?" she asked, and, leaning over the edge of a big rock, she looked down into the clear sea-water. But no one answered.

"Bubble-Bubble art thou there?" she called again, and bent her head low over the water. Plainly she heard a voice answering from the depths below: "Yes! I am here."

"May I venture down to thee?" she asked again. She was so sure it was Bubble-Bubble's voice she heard.

A whisper floated up to her from below: "Come, come quickly!"

Then Vifva went out on to the very edge of the rocks where the sea was so deep she could not see the bottom.

"Since thou cannot come to me I will come to

thee," she said. "Now, now, I come!" and with these words she sprang out into the water.

But this time the merman did not breathe upon her face. He let her sink like a milk-white stone to the bottom of the sea.

"What have such as thou to do with us?" he muttered, and thrust her under the sand.

But there above them lay the great wide sea. It sparkled and laughed in the sunshine as if there had never been any Vifva nor any poor little Bubbly-boy.

The Princess who hid her shoes

THE PRINCESS WHO HID HER SHOES

Once upon a time there was a king who had an only son. He was one day of course to inherit the kingdom after his father and to become king himself, but he did not care one straw either for affairs of state or for the splendours of the court. The only thing he cared about was to play upon his lute.

He had a most beautiful one with a high curved back and a long neck like a swan's, and all inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl, and upon this lute the prince played from morning to night. If anyone disturbed him in his room, he went out into the pleasure gardens, if they sought him there, he hastened away into the tower, if they called up to him in the tower, he fled away into the wild wood. All he wanted was to be left alone with his lute. He made up all the melodies himself,

and you may be sure they were the loveliest tunes imaginable. Some of them were very tragic, with strong sweeping chords across the lower strings, and the sound of them was like the waves beating upon a rocky shore. These the prince played when he fell to thinking how sad it was that he never, never could be left in peace. But besides these, there were others—merry, sparkling tunes, which danced away like the very sunbeams themselves across the thin silvery strings, with their light, clear tones. These the prince played when he sprang away into the woods and knew that no one could find him. Aye, indeed! the prince could play! and better than anyone; but alas! he could not sing the least little bit—in fact, he had not so much as a single note in his throat. Many a time he sighed to himself, and said: "I must say it really is most provoking that I, who can play so well, cannot even sing to my own music."

He tried to console himself with whistling. This did fairly well, at least for the merry tunes; for the mournful ones, in a grander strain, whistling did not do at all. When the prince

played these he would gaze around out of those black eyes of his and say to himself: "If only there were someone to sing to my playing!"

But when the prince was grown-up, the king thought it was about time he were married, so he talked it over with a neighbouring king who had an only daughter, and they settled it between them to marry their children to one another. It was such an admirable arrangement in every way. Their kingdoms adjoined, both monarchs were alike rich and powerful, and had been comrades in arms and boon companions in their youth. The prince and princess had never seen each other as yet, but this was a small matter; when they were once married, then they could sit and look at one another for the rest of their lives, and that would be perhaps more than enough for them.

So one fine morning the king went in to his son's room, where the prince sat whistling to the accompaniment of his lute. He had just been composing a new melody which he called the "contrary-wise" tune, for every note in it was just exactly the contrary of what you might expect.

"Pray be seated, my royal father," said the prince, continuing to play.

"Can't you stop that twanging on the strings for half a moment?" said the king, stroking his beard. "I have an important matter to discuss with you."

The prince laid his lute across his knee and glanced at his father. "What is it about?" he said, looking utterly miserable.

"Well, nothing more or less than that I am thinking of marrying you, my boy, and my choice has fallen upon our royal neighbour's daughter. She is young, and pretty, and suits us admirably in every respect. You will please be prepared to ride off to-morrow to woo her."

The prince gave a deep sigh. "One never can be left in peace, and now, added to everything, I must go off and get married!" he said, passing all his five fingers through his thick hair and looking perfectly distracted.

"Now don't let us have any fuss about it," said the king. "You ought to be thankful to get such a young and pretty wife."

"I don't even know what she looks like, this

princess," said the prince, beginning once more to pick out the notes of his "contrary-wise" tune.

"You will know that to-morrow when you see her," answered the king; "as to that, she has red hair and black eyes."

"I have black eyes myself," replied the prince, "so I have enough of that commodity; and as for red hair, it is my abomination. She looks then exactly like a little red fox, of course?"

"You talk like the foolish person you are," said the king. "But the matter is already settled. To-morrow, before the sun has risen too high, you must be off to woo the princess. I will undertake to see that you go with a retinue befitting your rank; and now I must be going."

The prince opened the door for the king and bowed low before him, but scarcely had he closed the door upon his Majesty when he broke out: "H'm! Two can play at this little game. I have made up my mind what *I* shall do!" And early the next morning, before anyone in the castle had lifted an eye-lid, the prince rose and dressed himself so quietly that even the flies on the window-pane did not wake up. He filled his silken purse

with ducats, slung his beloved lute across his shoulder, and hopped through the window down into the garden. Then he scrambled over the garden wall and found himself out on the open road.

Now the prince had never in his life before been up so early in the morning, and he fell to wondering how the world could look so beautiful, whilst everybody lay abed, and there was no one to look at it. The clear, bright waters of the lake shone like the sea itself, there was not a cloud in the sky, and the dew on every plant and blade of grass glittered and sparkled with all the colours of the rainbow.

The prince felt so gay and light-hearted that he could not resist thrumming very gently upon the lute strings. He did not dare to play loudly lest anyone should hear him. It was not until he had reached the heart of the wood, where the beech trees drooped their long, sweeping branches about him and the fragrant pines rose like a rampart between him and the open country, that he first gripped the strings firmly and brought out some fine dashing chords.

The sky was so brilliantly blue and his spirits so brilliantly gay that he just let his lute vibrate with a perfect hurricane of sweet sounds. He had given no thought as to whither he should wander, he only knew he wanted to get away, far, far away from the court and wedding feasts and everything that was tiresome and provoking and to be left quietly alone with his lute.

The sun rose higher and higher in the heavens, and the prince began to feel both hungry and thirsty. It was true he had his silken purse full of ducats, but in all the great wild wood there was nothing to buy. He came across a little spring at at last, gushing forth out of a cleft in the rock, and here he quenched his thirst and lay down on the grass awhile to rest, then he wandered on again in the mid-day heat.

Now the forest began to open out, and the pathway led across an open glade. Here along the runnels by the wayside grew a long row of blossoming briar-bushes, for it was now nigh upon midsummer. The little round pink roses smiled so pleasantly at the prince that he stooped to pick a flower for his cap, but as he bent back the

trailing branches that the thorns might not prick him, he caught sight of something twinkling deep down amid the bushes. What could it be? He thrust his hand down in amongst the brambles, and behold, what did he find? Why, the sweetest little shoe of green velvet, all embroidered with gold and real pearls!

"A shoe," said the prince, and smiled, "a shoe! Well, where there is one shoe there are probably two"; and so saying he thrust his hand once more far down into the bushes, and sure enough he caught up another little shoe precisely like the first. They were as small and as dainty as a pair of child's shoes, but as costly and as cunningly wrought as if made for a princess.

"Now how did the shoes get into the bushes!" thought the prince looking round; but not a trace of any living creature was to be seen. Just then, however, it struck the prince that the long grass growing in the glade looked as if it had been trodden under foot, making what looked like a little track leading away in amongst the hazel-bushes.

"Ha, ha!" thought the prince, "some one has

crept away into the coppice just here." And thereupon he went tip-toeing softly over the grass across the meadow. The track was such a tiny one that every now and then it was hardly visible, and the prince said to himself: "Some small creature has scurried across here, a little foxling maybe, has sprung into the thicket."

But as he went along he simply *had* to stop again and again to gaze about him, for such a wondrously beautiful dingle as this he had never before beheld. The ground was billowy like the sea, now rising up into little knolls, now sinking deep into little hollows, and the grass, starred with a myriad flowers, grew knee-deep everywhere. Big ox-eyed daisies shone like bright stars, and the cotton grass swung its silken tufts gently to and fro. Spruce firs grew there, short and stubby, with their new shoots standing up like Christmas candles on every bough, their tops crowned with cones as red as the wild strawberry, and a fluttering network of the pale purple vetch flung lightly across their branches. The hazels had grown into great bushes of swelling green with their broad leaves and thick clusters

of nuts ready for the ripening, and the birches reared their silvery stems and wrapped themselves about in their long veils of dainty foliage. Here and there stood an ancient oak with quite a little knot of young trees crowding round to listen to his stories. Spruce firs crept in under his arms, poplars leaned against his shoulders and the briar-roses climbed up and up, by the longest of their long trailing branches and twined themselves in and out of his hoary locks, from which all the little rosy blossoms peeped out like small baby faces.

A little stream, come from the mountains, flowed through the woodland, but it could only be heard, not seen, for when the alders heard it murmuring they had loped lightly thither and planted themselves so thickly to look down upon it that there was no room for anyone else.

And here the roses grew in greatest profusion. They climbed up the trees and flung garlands across from bush to bush. They snatched away the prince's cap with their long thorny sprays and set snares for his feet in the long grass. Turn wherever he would he could see nothing but roses.

"Any number of roses here," quoth the prince, pausing awhile. Somewhere on a hilly slope sat a thrush and sang. The prince could not see it for it was hidden deep in a thicket, but he stopped to listen to all the merry music it was making. It was certainly singing to someone, for every now and then it would be silent as if waiting for an answering call. And now the prince really did hear someone reply with a blithe whistle, away in amongst the trees. Could it be a bird? Surely not, that was no bird, that was a human voice—a little maiden's voice.

"She whistles well," thought the prince, "almost as well as I," and thereupon he stole softly forward through the bushes. Then all at once he noticed that the little grass-trodden path had stopped short, and that the grass in the glade was standing up stiff and proud, waving and beckoning with all its many starry flowers.

Just at this spot stood an old lime tree with long drooping branches, and a few paces in front of it grew a hazel and a briar bush; the briar had spanned an arch of blossoming roses right across to the hazel tree. Beneath was the prettiest

arbour, where the sunbeams danced in a shower of gold through the leaves, and underneath all this green lay a moss-covered stone, and on this stone someone was sitting!

The prince turned aside the branches very, very gently, and peeped in, and behold, what did he see? why the very sweetest little princess, with her hair falling about her and a dainty crown on her head! She was sitting with her eyes down, threading strawberries on a straw and whistling the while. Then the prince, too, began to whistle softly between his teeth. But when the little maid heard him, she looked up and uttered such a scream that Echo, who was sleeping through the mid-day heat up on the mountain-side, awoke, and, starting to her feet, shrieked wildly to the hills across the lake. And all the hills answering, shouted together: "O—h, O—h, what is it? what is it? what is it?"

"Why do you scream so?" said the prince. "I am not at all dangerous." Then he took stock of the princess.

She had black eyes and red hair and the whitest hands he had ever seen. Her dress was the colour

of the summer sky, embroidered with the pale purple flower of the vetch and light green grass. Round her neck she had a necklace of many rows of small creamy pearls, and on her head she wore a coronet studied with blue and green gems. On her feet she had flaming red stockings, but she had no shoes! This the prince noticed at once, although she had hastily drawn her feet in under her.

"What reward for treasure trove?" asked the prince, holding behind his back the small shoes he had found.

"Are they my shoes?" cried the princess, stretching out her hands. "Oh, kind sir, please give me my shoes."

"Yes, but first say what is to be my reward?" asked the prince again.

"Oh, you shall have these strawberries on a straw," said the princess, lifting them up between her small fingers. "I picked them myself, and they are quite ripe, every single one of them."

"Agreed," said the prince. So he set the little shoes down before the princess and received the strawberries in exchange.

"May I sit here, too, beside you and eat them?" asked the prince.

"Certainly, why not?" answered the princess, and made room for him beside her on the stone.

"Of course I shouldn't think of depriving you of all your strawberries any way," said the prince. "We'll eat them together, turn and turn about." And this they accordingly did. First the princess drew a strawberry off the straw and popped it into the prince's mouth, and then he drew one off and popped it into hers, and so sweet and ripe were the berries they literally melted in the mouth. When nothing but the straw was left the prince wiped his fingers and looked at the princess.

"Why did you thrust your shoes under a bush, you queer little maid?" said he. "Don't you know it is dangerous to walk in the high grass in your stockings? There are snakes about here, and they might easily bite your feet."

"I am not a bit afraid of snakes," replied the princess, "I am only afraid of people; and the further I ran the more footmarks did my shoes leave behind in the grass, that was why I hid them in the bushes."

"Poor little thing," said the prince. "But what harm could people possibly wish to such a sweet little princess as you?"

"Ah well," said the princess, and sighed, "you see they want to marry me off to a prince whom I have never seen and whom I would not marry—no, not if they were to throw him at me."

"Why, that is exactly my case," said the prince. "My father wants to marry me off too, to a princess whom I have never seen and whom I hope I never shall see, and to escape the whole tiresome business I took myself off."

"What was the princess like?" asked the princess, looking at the prince out of the corner of her eye.

"Well, you see, she has black eyes and red hair, and is just exactly like a wretched little foxling," said the prince.

"Oh, how horrid you are!" said the princess. She sat waving a branch to and fro to keep off the flies. "At any rate you can be quite sure they don't mean *me*. Just look at my hair, do you call that red?"—she let her long hair slip over her slender palm and held it right up under the prince's

nose. "Strawberries are red, but my hair is brown and black, and golden too when it catches the sunlight. Don't you see how it glistens? And look at my eyes"—she drew the lower lid down on her cheek, and leaning forward, lifted her face up to his. "Wouldn't you say my eyes were really dark blue? It is only when the shadows fall across them that they look black."

"You have the loveliest hair and the loveliest eyes I ever saw, that's all I know!" said the prince. "But tell me what the prince was like whom you ran away from in your stockings."

"Oh, well, what he looks like I really cannot say," the princess replied, "for, thank goodness, I have never seen him, but they say he is quite crazy. I hear he cares neither for work nor sport, nor anything but play. They say, too, he plays from morning to night like a madman, but whether it be at dice or any other game I do not know, and as to that it is of little consequence, for whichever way it were, he might easily play away all our possessions, and a pretty fix we should be in, sitting there with empty hands with not so much as a cup of wine to call our own perhaps. And

you may be sure whatever the man is like whom I shall one day marry, crazy at least he shall not be, be he ever so much a prince."

"All you have just been saying luckily does not apply to me at all," said the prince. "For I am by no means half-witted, on the contrary, I have a very good head of my own, and the only thing I can play is my lute, and that is the most precious thing in all the world to me."

"Is that it there slung across your shoulders?" asked the princess. "Oh, *do* play a little for me."

Then the prince swung the lute round and laid it across his knee.

"What a pretty thing it is and how queer looking," said the princess, her white fingers straying over the strings; "I have never seen anything like it before."

"'Never heard,' you'll say in a moment," answered the prince. "But now listen and then you shall hear"; and he began to play.

First he struck the strings very, very softly till it sounded like the wind blowing lightly across the tips of the grasses, then he let gay, staccato notes hop and dance like sunbeams in the air, and

at last he struck big chords full of tumultuous sound like the waves beating up against the cliffs. The longer he played the more and more wondrously did the sweet notes blend and weave themselves together.

The princess sat leaning forward with her hair falling aslant her cheeks, her eyes fixed upon the lute whence all these lovely sounds streamed forth. When the last faint echoes of the music had died away amid the shadows she sighed and said:

"Oh, how lovely! But why don't you sing to it?"

"I can't sing," said the prince. "That is just the annoying part of it all."

"You can't sing?" cried the princess in astonishment. "How extraordinary!"

"You can sing perhaps?" asked the prince.

"Can I sing!" answered the princess. "You just begin playing and then you shall hear."

"But you don't know my tunes," said the prince, "for I composed them myself, every one of them."

That does not matter," answered the princess. "Just play and you shall hear."

And he began to play.

So the prince fell to playing once more and the princess began to sing. She had the sweetest of voices, clear and warm like sunshine, high and soft like summer air. And no matter how the prince played, changing from one key to another, slipping from a gay refrain into a sad one and back to a gay refrain once more, the princess was always in time and tune to the music. Her voice winged away over the notes like a boat over the waves. She sat and gazed into the lute and caught the melody almost before it was played.

"How in the name of all that is wonderful can you sing to my tunes which you have never heard before?" asked the prince.

"I guess them," replied the princess, laughing; "I watch the notes and see which way they mean to fly."

"Just wait, and I will play you a tune which you will certainly not be able to guess," said the prince. He was thinking of the last tune he had composed, the "Contrary-wise tune," which invariably produced the most unexpected harmonies.

But the princess was not baffled. Her big eyes turned quite black with gazing into the lute, her hair shone purple-red in the sunlight, and whilst the prince's fingers flew from one key to another her voice would chime in too, hopping hither and thither like a bird fastened by its leg to a cord.

Then the prince dashed into the quaintest, craziest melodies such as he had never as yet tried, but she followed him as surely with her voice as if she had heard them many a time before.

"Why, I declare you are a perfect wonder," said the prince, laying his lute across his knee. "Why, next we shall be having you making up the words to the tune, just as you are sitting there!"

"Oh, I could do that quite easily," answered the princess—her cheeks were quite flushed—"but then the words would be as contrary-wise as the tune you were playing."

"Why, that's just what it is called, 'The contrary-wise tune,'" laughed the prince, beginning to play again; and then the princess sang:

Free would I be—alone, to laugh or sigh,
But Love along my path springs lightly by.
When I do rest awhile—awhile rests he.
When I do walk—gaily he walks with me,
Was it black, was it red, was it fox-red hair?
Was it me, was it you, the lute's magic did snare?

Whate'er I willed, now will I more than all.
Love sweetly trilling, joins the charmed lute's call.
Say, do you weep, do you laugh? Nay, you smile through your tears.
Say, who has stolen my heart, claimed my faith, stilled my fears?
See, my gold-broidered shoes! Who has found my shoes?
Little green, little gold, little pearl-broidered shoes!

"Ha, ha!" laughed the prince. "That was a jolly song. How did you hit upon it?"

"How did you hit upon my shoes in the bushes?" asked the princess.

"Indeed I cannot say," said the prince; "all I know is I did not look for them, of that I am very sure! But now you shall put on your shoes for we must be going." Thereupon he knelt down in front of the princess and fastened her golden shoe-clasps over her red stockings.

"There!" said the prince. "Now your shoes are on and we can be off."

"And where shall we go?" asked the princess.

"Oh, I don't know," said the prince; "where did you think of going?"

"Well, really, I can't say exactly," she answered and lowered her eyelids. "My one idea was to run away, look, I had brought away my money with me, my silk purse is full of ducats!"

"So is mine," said the prince, drawing out his purse of gold. "But what can we get for all our gold here in this wilderness?—not as much as a crust of dry bread!"

"No," the princess sighed, "not so much as a crust!"

"I tell you what," said the prince. "I think we had better go home to my royal father and tell him we want to marry each other."

"Are you sure *I* want to?" said the princess, looking at him out of the tail of her eye.

"No, of course I am not *sure*," said the prince, a little embarrassed, "I only guess you do."

"Then you guess quite rightly," said the princess, and thereupon they kissed each other.

But all this time the prince's royal father sat at home in the royal castle, storming at his son who had made good his escape and was nowhere to be found in the morning when all the courtiers came riding to accompany him on his journey to woo the princess. There was nothing for it but for all these noble lords to dismount and send their horses back to their stables again.

The king was in such a bad temper that all the courtiers stole about the corridors on tip-toe as if they had been preparing for a funeral instead of a wedding. But at last, towards the end of the day, the king caught sight of a couple coming along arm in arm through the gardens in the light of the setting sun. And by all the saints, wasn't that his vagabond son, coming coolly along, twanging that everlasting old lute of his? But who was the little maid he had got hold of? Wasn't that a crown on her head, glittering in the evening sunlight? Who in the name of fortune could it be?

"A moment later the door leading into the king's apartments was flung open, and on the threshold stood the prince and princess arm in arm!

"My royal father," said the prince, "here you see the bride I have chosen. Her will I wed and no other in the world."

"How did you get hold of *her*?" said the king, stroking his beard.

"First I found her shoes and then I found her heart," answered the prince. "She can sing all my tunes although she has never heard them before, and we mean to sing and play together for the rest of our lives."

"Then we are all agreed," said the king, holding out his hand. "For she is our royal neighbour's daughter herself, and the very maid I had chosen for your bride."

"She?" said the prince, looking with amazement at the princess. "But she hasn't black eyes and fox-red hair?"

"Tut, tut," said the king, "it is a small matter what colour her hair is, as long as she is the right one."

And so a most magnificent wedding took place in the castle. First came the king, then came the prince and princess, then a page bearing two small shoes upon a velvet cushion, and after them

followed the court in most gorgeous array, with drums beating and banners flying.

And so the prince and princess lived long together, and a happier married couple was never seen, for however queer and contrary-wise were the tunes he played *she* always understood how to sing the loveliest lays to them.

The Queen's Necklace

THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE

Once upon a time there lived an old king whom you could not very well call good, in fact, if the sad truth must be told, he was very disagreeable and horrid. He had been obstinate and tyrannical all his life, and as you know, this sort of thing gets worse rather than better as the years go by, and now he had become in his old age a regular curmudgeon. He was so surly and bad-tempered that his knights and squires never dared laugh or jest when the king was anywhere near, and as for his immediate attendants, they always stood stock-still and as stiff as pokers with their eyes glued on the royal throne.

Occasionally it might chance perhaps that the king would be in a good temper, and then he would hammer on the table with his knife and fork and say, "Hey, ho! let's be jolly," and then all the knights and squires would try to make jokes, but

at the slightest word which displeased the king, he would look furious, roll his eyes about, and comb his beard with his fingers, and then they knew what they were in for!

No, indeed, it was anything but a jolly life at that king's court!

In the years gone by the king had had a queen-wife and several small princes besides, but both queen and princes had died—some say from sheer terror of the king.

Now in his old age the king had a fancy for marrying again, for he thought he was having such a very dull time of it, and he cast his eye over his many kingdoms to spy out a suitable wife for himself.

In this way his eye fell upon the daughter of one of his vassal-kings, quite a young princess who was called "Blanzeflor." "She is as fair as a sunny day, as mild as a dove, and as meek as a lamb, and she is only seventeen years old too! She will suit me admirably," said the king. He never considered for a moment whether he himself, who was as ugly as sin, as old as the hills, and as savage as a watch-dog, was so specially suited

to the young princess. This never occurred to him at all. For was he not the great liege lord of kings who held dominion over many lands, and she but the little daughter of an insignificant kinglet? She might well courtsy to the ground to express her gratitude for the unheard-of honour of becoming the old king's wife.

But when her father came to her and said:

"Blanzeflor, our sovereign lord the king would have you for his queen," she wept and said she would rather sit upon a stone and spin goats'-wool, than sit as queen at *that* king's side.

But when her father said she must realise that if she refused the king he would come and hang both her father and mother and all the family upon a tree like so many bunches of onions, then the princess bowed her head and said, "Then I will marry him."

So they clad her in silk and in gold, and set a crown upon her head and combed her long golden hair over her shoulders, then they lifted her upon a white palfrey and rode forth with her to the king, and thus the wedding took place.

On the wedding day the king hung a necklace of pearls around her neck.

"I threaded them myself on this silken cord," said the king. "These are pearls of the East and there are three hundred and sixty-five of them, the smallest being a little crooked; and I warn you," he added, "take great care of them, for on the day you lose the necklace, I warrant you will not care to look me in the eyes"; and the king began to roll his eyes so horribly that the young queen felt cold shivers all down her spine. Thus Blanzeflor became queen, and a gentle and submissive wife she was to her lord and master the king.

In the mornings the king ate porridge and cream in bed, and the queen carried it to him in a golden bowl and fed him like a baby, for such was his command. Every evening the king and queen would play chess, and then the queen always had to let the king win, otherwise he would get bad-tempered and this gave him a pain in his royal inside, which was of course very annoying.

And there the beautiful young Blanzeflor would sit with her cheek resting on her hand, and look thoughtfully over the pieces as if wondering how she could most speedily win, when she was really thinking how she might most speedily lose, for then

the king would be in a good temper and rub his hands and say, "Ah, you little women-folk, you have no more sense than geese!" and then he would explain to her at great length how easily she might have won if she had but thought a little.

But the very worst was at meal-time, for the king was so proud he would not let anyone sit at table with the queen and himself. The king and queen were marshalled into the banqueting hall to the sound of kettle-drum and trumpet, with the whole court following in procession; but when they reached the table it was always laid for two only. Here the king and queen sat upon their thrones, and the courtiers stood along the walls in long rows with their heads all turned towards the royal thrones. When the king and queen drank out of their golden goblets, the trumpets sounded a fanfare, and were the king only to sneeze or cough, the whole court would make obeisance and shout, "God bless your Majesty." Now and again the king would take it into his head to tell a story. He had difficulty in remembering what he wanted to say, and besides this he had no teeth, so that it

was most troublesome to understand him, but he insisted upon everyone laughing at his tales, and if the court forgot to do so the king would shout, "But you are not laughing!"

"Oh, yes, we are laughing, we are laughing. Ha! Ha! Ha!" the whole court would answer, and burst into loud laughter, which had no more sound in it than the clatter of heels upon a wooden staircase. It was indeed a doubtful pleasure.

But the young queen would sit with downcast eyes, scarcely daring to swallow a morsel, so greatly did she tremble with fear lest something should displease the king, for then he became quite terrible. The only pleasure the court had was to stand and stare at Blanzeflor, for she glowed with a beauty more bright and radiant than all the torch-lights in the banqueting hall, and when she bowed and smiled it warmed the heart like the sun in summer.

Now, dreadful stories came to the queen's ears of how the king would fling people into prison for the smallest offence, or wring their necks like chickens, but alas! what could she do in the matter! She herself sat like a prisoner in the

royal castle, and never was she allowed to go out alone on foot, but only on horseback followed by a royal retinue.

It happened one day, however, that the queen was in church—there at least the king could not prevent her from going—and as she knelt in prayer before the high altar, she noticed how poorly and meanly God's holy altar was adorned.

Then the queen wept bitterly and said to herself: "I drink out of golden goblets, and silver torches are lighted on my table, but upon God's altar the candlesticks are of pewter and the velvet cloth which covers the Lord's table is all faded and patched. I cannot bear to see it." And thereupon she slowly and quietly unclasped her necklace, drew off seven of the largest pearls and laid them upon the altar.

That evening she had her hair combed back and fastened in a knot upon her neck, so that the king might not see that the pearls were missing. Before, she had worn her hair on the top of her head.

"What is the meaning of this?" said the king, slightly raising the queen's braids.

"It means that I am queen," she answered, and smiled. "Maids wear crowns of plaited hair, but a queen who wears a golden crown wears her hair down upon her shoulders. Is it displeasing to my lord?" But the king only laughed, and said she was more beautiful than ever.

Now it happened one night that the queen lay awake. She could not sleep because she thought she heard strange sounds of sighing and sobbing out in the night; these sounds were really all the prayers and lamentations of the poor, which hovered about the castle walls, and beat against the window panes, but never could find their way in.

It all sounded so piteous and heartrending that the queen wept upon her silken pillow. "Here I lie upon my bed of satin," she sighed, "whilst outside, perhaps little children go barefooted in the snow. I cannot bear to think of it." Outside lay snow and ice and it was biting cold, and the queen saw how the glistering ice-flowers grew upon the window-panes. But with the dawn the faint uncertain sounds of distress grew louder and louder. There was a sound of twittering and

chirping, and now she saw how one little half-frozen bird after another flew up and tapped upon the window-pane with its beak, in search of a chance grain of corn.

"Alas, alas!" sighed the queen, "I eat roast venison out of a golden dish and drink mulled wine, and there outside the poor little birds starve to death in the cold. I cannot bear to think of it"; and the next day she begged leave of the king to collect the crumbs after meals and to place them in a basket outside her window for the birds.

Well of course the king thought it was asking a good deal, but as the queen never begged for anything for herself, and the crumbs were after all of not much use for anything else, he allowed her to take them, and from that day the queen always sat and rolled bread between her white fingers during meals, and crumbled one little piece after another into little bits, whilst she chatted and jested with the king, so that he might not pay any heed to what she was doing, and when she rose from the table she would sign to her page, and then he would brush all the crumbs into a small

basket, which was hung outside the queen's chamber window, and at sunrise she was always awakened by the chirping of the small hungry birds when they came to empty her basket.

Now it happened one morning, when the queen took in the basket to have it refilled, that she thought she saw a large snowflake lying at the bottom, but it was really a little piece of paper which had been folded round a small stone and thrown up at the window, and on it was written a suffering creature's tale of misery.

"The queen who takes pity upon the starving birds of the air," it said, "will surely take pity upon the starving children upon earth"; and the queen read it over and over again, whilst her tears fell like rain in spring. Never had she dreamed there could be so much suffering and distress in the world.

This was a poor lonely mother with quite a number of small children, who were starving in the forest, which the queen could see far away in the distance.

But how could she help them? The king would only allow her to ride out through the

streets of the city accompanied by a lordly retinue to greet her faithful subjects, and it was strictly forbidden for anyone to speak to royalty!

They all saw how beautiful the queen was, and they bowed their heads before her as to their sovereign, but no one knew how good she was, nor how her heart bled for them, beneath the white ermine.

And when she appeared before her people with a sad face and tearful eyes, they thought she was either angry or unhappy, but they did not know she was only weeping because she was unable to do even the smallest thing to help those in sorrow or misfortune.

The queen thought and thought how she could help the poor mother, who had begged along with the birds at her chamber window.

But at last she hit upon a plan.

The king had given the queen a page, who was as young and beautiful as herself. He carried her long velvet train embroidered with golden crowns, he filled her goblet with wine, and lit the torch which was to light her upon her way through the dark passages within the castle, and he slept on a

bear skin outside her door with his drawn sword beside him to protect her from all harm.

His eyes were always fixed upon the queen's face to read there her smallest desire or command, and his greatest reward was when she smiled and thanked him. Now when the page came to carry the train of her sky-blue velvet gown, the queen bent down as if to adjust it, and at the same time she slipped a little piece of paper into the page's hand. In it she had placed one of the pearls from off her necklace, and had written down where she wished him to carry it.

If the queen had asked him to jump from the roof of the castle into the castle moat itself, he would not have hesitated for a moment. How easy it was then for him to carry out this command of hers!

Away he flew as swiftly as a swallow, and when he took up the queen's train again that evening, he placed his hands upon his breast and bowed in silence, but the queen could read in his face that her errand had well sped.

From that day prayers and petitions simply rained down upon the queen's window-sill.

It was not only the little birds that came begging to her basket, but all who were groaning under poverty or distress.

When the queen lay awake at night, she could hear it simply hail with small stones, which were being thrown up with petitions to her window. Once it happened even that a stone broke a window-pane, but the queen only thought the frost had cracked it.

In the morning the queen would search her basket and read her people's prayers, and weep many a salt tear over their sore distress and misery.

She would have liked to empty the whole castle and give its gorgeous treasures to the poor and unhappy, but the king never gave her so much as a farthing piece to give away. What could she do but take the pearls from her necklace? And so with trembling hands she drew off one pearl after another.

It was always her page who had to go upon her errands of mercy, and when he came gaily along, clad in his sovereign's favourite sky-blue colour, with three small plumes waving in his cap, the poor and starving folk would smile and say,

"Look! where the queen's carrier pigeon comes flying, there is always something in his beak!"

But the necklace grew smaller and smaller every day as you may well imagine; and, that the king might not notice this, the queen let more and more of her golden hair hang down over her neck and face, and drew all the pearls forward upon her breast that the king shouldn't see how many were missing behind and at the sides, and soon only a thin string of pearls was left. These she must indeed keep! But there only wanted a fresh appeal more touching than the rest for one more pearl to slip from the necklace, and finally one morning there was not a single pearl left.

How could she now hide this from the king? However, she did what she could and combed her golden hair down over her forehead, hiding both her cheeks and crossing the ends over her breast, fastened them together with a white rose.

But the king was not in a good temper at dinner that day.

"What are all these tricks you are playing with your hair?" he asked. "Every day you hide more and more of your face, and to-day I can only

just see the tip of your nose as you sit beside me. Away with those bands of hair and let me see you properly"; and so saying he flung back the queen's long hair over her shoulders, and then he saw that the necklace was missing!

"Where is the necklace?" he shrieked. His voice sounded like a hoarse old crow's. "Where is the necklace?"

The queen looked confused.

"Oh, I have not got it on to-day," she said. But the king had her eight tire-women and her eight ladies-in-waiting called up, and they had to search over and over through all the queen's drawers and presses, till they were as red as cranberries, but the necklace was not to be found.

"Have you lost the necklace?" roared the king. His voice sounded now like a bull bellowing.

"No!" said the queen, timidly.

"Have you given it away?" shouted the king. "To whom have you given it?"

Then the queen dropped her eyelids and said nothing.

"To whom have you given it?" the king

shouted again, but the queen never answered a single word.

"Very well, madam, you can be as silent as you like, but I tell you I shall rest neither day nor night until I find the fellow to whom you have given the necklace, and be he the first man in my kingdom he shall die the death"; and with this the king rose so abruptly that his throne toppled over, and then with great bluster and fuss he marched out of the banqueting hall.

He had the queen thrown into prison; there she was to remain until the necklace was found.

Now you can imagine what a hurly-burly there was after this. The king in front, with six attendants at his heels, searched the whole castle from garret to cellar.

Every single room belonging to every knight and lady-in-waiting was searched, and the king with his own royal hand turned everything out of all their drawers and closets, and tossed cloaks and velvet trains, silken hose and plumed caps in every direction.

All the halls and corridors were strewn with garments, which the king had unearthed. In the

The king with his own royal hand turned everything out

open windows even, hung veils and surcoats, tunics and trunk-hose, so that the castle looked more like a rag-shop than a royal palace. But still the necklace was not to be found.

Now it so happened that the queen's page, who was the son of a noble knight, had lately received a court-dress as a gift from his father.

The old knight lived far away beyond the sea, but he had sent this gala suit to his young son by a travelling merchant, whose ship touched at the port where the old knight lived.

The old knight was very proud of the fact that his son was the queen's page; and when he learned that sky-blue was the queen's favourite colour, and that she liked to wear a necklace of pearls, he had his son's suit made of sky-blue velvet in honour of the queen, and on the front of the vest he had the queen's name embroidered in white pearls with many a turn and flourish.

This costly dress had not been worn hitherto by the page, in fact he had not even seen it.

It lay still unpacked in a corner of his room in the box in which it had but lately arrived.

But as the king was now searching the whole

palace, he came of course to the page's room, too.

He flung all the clothes and jewels out of the drawers and presses, and then suddenly his eye fell upon the little box in the corner.

He kicked the lock to pieces, and opened the box, and there was the gorgeous sky-blue velvet suit, tunic and hose, bonnet and cloak and all, and the vest with the queen's name embroidered in white pearls.

The pearls were precisely like those in the queen's necklace, and the king fell on his knees at once, and began to count them with trembling fingers.

And what do you think happened? There were just exactly three hundred and sixty-five pearls, and one of them was a little crooked. "What do I see, what do I see," hissed the king. His voice seemed to have died away; it sounded just like a snake hissing in the grass.

"Here are the queen's pearls, I know them as well as I know my own eyes, for has not every one of them passed through my fingers? Here they all are even to the little crooked one, which I held

in my hand last. Here is the thief. It is the page who has stolen the queen's pearls.

So the page was marshalled before the king, and the king was so furious that as soon as he saw the page he struck him right in the face. "Thief and robber, miserable slave! It is you who have stolen the queen's pearls," he shouted so loudly that all the town could hear him.

"I am no thief, your Majesty. I know nothing of any pearls," answered the page without flinching.

"You have had them given you perhaps? Has the queen dared to give away my royal gift to one of her attendants?" roared the king.

"I have received nothing from the queen," answered the page, "and never would she have bestowed her royal husband's gift upon one of his retinue."

And then the page explained how the pearl-sewn suit was a gift from his father, which he had received the day before from a sea captain, and had had no time to unpack.

But the king refused to believe a word of this.

"Where are the queen's pearls, if these are not they embroidered upon your tunic? You, who were her chief page and cup-bearer must know where the pearls are to be found. Answer me. Where is the queen's necklace?"

But the page's only answer was to spread out his arms and shrug his shoulders. Not a word passed across his lips, and although he knew all too well how one pearl after another had slipped off the queen's necklace, he knew too that he would sooner be hacked in pieces than betray the queen's secret with a single word.

Then the king ordered the page to be flung into the deepest dungeon in the castle, and accordingly he was put in chains and led away.

So now the queen sat in one dungeon and the page in another, and awaited their doom.

And after three days they were told that if the necklace was not in the king's possession within twenty-four hours, the page was to be hanged upon the highest gallows, and the queen to be beheaded in the sight of all her people.

The queen knew well that if she were to say where the pearls were, all the innocent and unhappy

would suffer death for her sake, and so she sat quietly there in silence, and waited for them to come and carry her away to be executed.

And the page already saw himself dangling from the gallows, for sooner would he have died a thousand deaths than betray the queen's secret.

But in the night several of the strongest and wisest of the knights in the castle took counsel together. They had compassion upon the handsome young page, who was doomed to die so young. He had always shown respect and deference towards his elders, and bade fair to be in time a brave and gallant knight, and all wished him well.

By dint of much cunning and bravery the page's friends managed to creep up underneath his prison window, which looked out upon the castle moat.

They threw a file into him, and with this he filed away the iron grating, and being young and slender he was able to squeeze through two iron bars, and then jump down into the arms of an old knight, who stood in a boat beneath the prison window ready to catch him.

Then they flung a cloak about him and con-

ducted him on board a ship, which was to cross the seas to his father's castle that same night.

When the red dawn came stealing over the waves, the page stood in the bow of the ship and saw the moon wane over the royal castle, whilst the vessel, with all sail set, steered its course across the glittering sea.

But alas for the queen, poor young Blanzeflor! She sat in the darkest of dungeons, within the innermost court of the castle. No one could get to her, either through cunning or bravery.

All the prayers and lamentations only, which the unhappy and oppressed sent up to her, fluttered around outside and beat against her prison walls like tired little birds.

She sat with her long golden hair all dishevelled, with her hands bound in heavy fetters, and gazed out into the darkness.

She knew she must soon die, and so she thought over all the sins she had committed in her life, and she began to tremble and feel afraid. Was it perhaps a great sin to have given away all the pearls which the king had said she was never to part with? And now, too, the young

page, who was quite innocent, must die for her sake. For this they had told her. And how was it at all possible for her to save him?

She fell on her knees upon the straw lying on the prison floor, and prayed to God that he might perform a miracle and set the guiltless free.

"Thou, O God, canst break through prison walls as easily as the sun breaks through the mists," she said, "Thou canst also set an innocent captive free."

But scarcely had she ended her prayer when she saw in the pale morning light how the thick prison walls fell apart, and between them came a swallow flying, as easily and as quickly as if it were merely flying through the air.

In its beak it held a white pearl, which it dropped upon the queen's knees.

"This is one of the tears you shed before the high altar," twittered the swallow, "God gives it you back in the likeness of a pearl."

At the same moment came another swallow through the wall, and another and another, and in a twinkling the whole prison was filled with a flight of birds, swallows, sparrows, finches and doves.

Each had a white pearl in its beak, which it laid upon Blanzeflor's lap.

"Here are the tears you shed for those who were poor and sad at heart," they chirped; "not one has fallen in vain."

At last came a little bird with a maimed wing; in its beak was the little crooked pearl, for this too had been threaded on the necklace.

"All we small starving birds to whom you gave crumbs in the winter snow," it twittered, "all we poor little birds have gathered your tears too," and it dropped the pearl into the queen's lap.

Blanzeflor sat perfectly still and let the pearls lie upon her knees, for she could not touch them with her fettered hands.

But when all the birds had dropped their pearls, they gathered in a great cloud about her, and, hovering above her head, disappeared through the prison walls which closed behind them.

Then the sun rose red in the East and shone into the prison so that it streamed with light like heaven itself. But just then the king came with all his retinue. He had come to take the queen

away to be beheaded. But when he saw her sitting with a halo of light around her and with the pearls in her lap, he stood stock-still with amazement. Then he began to count the pearls, and every single one was there, all three hundred and sixty-five even to the little crooked one! But the silken cord on which they had been strung was missing. "Why, here we have all the pearls! Here indeed they all are," shouted the king. The queen said nothing and only smiled. "But the cord on which they were threaded," said the king, "where is that?" The queen dropped her eyelids and looked sorrowful.

"Ah, I quite understand, I quite understand!" said the king. "Of course the cord broke, and knowing I had threaded every pearl myself with my own royal hands you would not wear them upon any other. But you might at least have told me that before, for you have my gracious pardon of course for losing the cord, such things do sometimes happen, and I am bound to say it was very proper and becoming on your part not to want to thread the pearls on any other string. But wait, I will fetch another at once." And away went the

king hobbling up the stairs to his own apartments to fetch a new silken cord. He was afraid to ask any one else because he feared they would steal something, and when the king had snipped off his cord he hurried back so quickly down to the prison again, that he tripped over his own feet and fell and broke his neck, and there he lay dead on the way down to the dungeons where he had let so many innocent people suffer and pine to death.

As the king kept them waiting so long, his courtiers went to look for him, and going up they stumbled upon something on the stairs, and behold! there was the king lying on his face quite dead. It certainly was no fun for him, but the rest of the world did not make much ado about it. It was only the queen who shed tears because she would have liked him to have become a little better before meeting with a sudden death.

However, what was done was done, so it was no use worrying over that. The king was buried, and the queen was proclaimed the only reigning sovereign in all the land.

And never was there a gentler queen than she. From the time the sun rose in the morning

until night came, she was to be found within the gates of the palace, ready to receive with open arms all who sought help and comfort from her. And this they found always.

If any one was in any trouble or distress they simply said :

"We shall go to the queen, there is sure to be one more pearl left on her Majesty's necklace!"

THE END

CENTRAL CIRCULATION

PRINTED BY
TURNBULL AND SPEARS,
EDINBURGH